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Summary record of the 12th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 9 October 2018, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Saikal ..... (Afghanistan)
later: Mr. Kováčik (Vice-Chair) ..... (Slovakia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 70: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) A/73/41 and A/73/278)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/73/174, A/73/257, A/73/272 and A/73/276)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (continued) (A/73/223)

1. **Ms. Winter** (Chair, Committee on the Rights of the Child) said that the Committee had devoted its recent biennial day of general discussion to the topic of protecting and empowering children as human rights defenders. Children wanted to be informed about their rights, to be able to exercise them, to be taken seriously and to be safe. The Committee had ensured their participation in both the discussions leading up to the event and the event itself. They had expressed deep concern about the increasing number of children escaping from war, violence and political turmoil, about violence in all of its forms, about discrimination against girls and ethnic and minority children and about preventable environmental harm.

2. Introducing the report of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (A/73/41), she said that all States but one had ratified or acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. During the past year, the pace of ratification of the Optional Protocols had been alarmingly slow, however. There had been only one accession to the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, two accessions to the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and four accessions to the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure, bringing the number of States parties to the three Optional Protocols to 168, 175 and 40, respectively.

3. Reporting could also be improved. Of the 100 initial reports due under the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, 42 were more than 10 years late. The Committee had received only two new reports under the Optional Protocols that year. The reporting situation for the Convention itself was only slightly better, as 18 periodic reports were more than five years overdue. She once again encouraged Member States to avail themselves of the capacity-building programme provided by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to help States fulfil their reporting obligations.

4. The Committee had held three sessions in 2018 and had reviewed and adopted concluding observations on 27 States parties' reports. Once again, the reports had revealed a need for much stronger efforts to implement the Committee's recommendations. Despite the 26 new reports received, the backlog stood at a still manageable 35. With regard to the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure, the Committee had found violations in three cases, declared three cases inadmissible and discontinued three cases. It had received 90 cases and registered 22, bringing the cases pending consideration to 44. Of those, 22 were ready to be considered but had been postponed because of staffing constraints, translation requirements and insufficient meeting time.

5. The Committee had carried out its first inquiry mission in January 2018 and had adopted the inquiry report at its seventy-eighth session. It was grateful to the Government of Chile for agreeing to make the report public and for the cooperation extended during its visit.

6. During its seventy-seventh session, around 50 States had attended the Committee's tenth annual informal meeting with States. Discussions had focused on, inter alia, the launch of the two joint general comments with the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; the Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty, the simplified reporting procedure, budgetary allocations for children's issues, the new structure of the concluding observations and the revision of general comment No. 10 (2007) on children's rights in juvenile justice. In line with General Assembly resolution 68/268, the Committee had started offering States parties the option of submitting reports under the simplified reporting procedure. So far, nine States had done so, and the first lists of issues prior to reporting had been sent in June 2018 to Croatia and Hungary.

7. During their most recent meeting, the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies had decided to appoint a focal point to facilitate discussions in each committee with a view to preparing a common treaty body contribution to the 2020 review of the treaty body system. In its review, the General Assembly should be guided by the need to strengthen the protection of rights holders; to preserve the integrity of the treaty body system and the independence of the committees and their experts; to improve the implementation of treaty obligations and treaty body recommendations and to ensure that steps taken to align procedures and working methods did not interfere with their specific mandates.

8. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General on the status of the human rights treaty body system

(A/73/309), the committees had been allocated insufficient staff to meet the workload targets, especially for individual communications, and other mandated activities had proved far more costly and labour-intensive than anticipated. To improve the system, resources provided for treaty bodies must be commensurate with their workloads, and the webcasting of treaty body sessions and reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities should be funded from the regular budget. If future resource allocation was not commensurate with the growth of the system, the Committee would not be able to keep up with its work under the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure, leading to a new backlog and defeating the purpose of the Optional Protocol.

9. **Ms. Yasunaga** (Japan) asked what challenges the Committee faced for further harmonization with the other treaty bodies, what steps it was taking and, on the eve of the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention, how the Chair saw the Committee's future.

10. **Ms. Wagner** (Switzerland), encouraging all States to ratify the three Optional Protocols, said that it welcomed the focus on children's rights in the context of international migrations and the ongoing work on children deprived of liberty. Although Switzerland was encouraged by progress in children's education and health care, it remained gravely concerned about regressive practices in juvenile justice and urged States to abolish the death penalty for persons under age 18. She would like to know what climate change-related dangers posed the most immediate risks for children.

11. **Mr. Whiteley** (Observer for the European Union) said that the European Union welcomed the Committee's efforts to contribute to the strengthening of the treaty body system and its decision to adopt a new format for its concluding observations. He would like to know the state of play of the work on the proposed new general comment on children's rights and the digital media, what major issues it might address and whether they would include Internet pornography. With regard to its revision of its general comment No. 10 (2007) on children's rights in juvenile justice, he would like to know what changes the Committee was considering.

12. **Mr. De La Mora Salcedo** (Mexico) said that his delegation welcomed the adoption of general comments Nos. 22 and 23 jointly with the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and wished to stress that Mexico did not institutionalize children with disabilities. Regarding the pervasive misunderstanding of children's right to inclusive and quality education, he would like to know the minimum requirements for ensuring such education.

13. **Mr. Kent** (United Kingdom) said that the protection and promotion of children's rights formed an integral part of the United Kingdom's domestic and international human rights agenda. In 2018, it had launched the Leave No Girl Behind campaign for girls' education, in addition to endorsing the Safe Schools Declaration and the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers. The United Kingdom was also a key donor to the Education Cannot Wait initiative, which aimed to make education an integral part of humanitarian responses. In November 2019, it would host an international meeting on preventing sexual violence in conflict addressing, inter alia, improved support for children born of rape. He asked how States could be encouraged to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration, as well as to provide information on measures taken to monitor their children's rights budgets at all levels of government.

14. **Ms. Winter** (Chair, Committee on the Rights of the Child) said that, in regard to collaboration with other treaty bodies, her Committee and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities had established a joint working group to explore the possibility of a joint general comment. However, OHCHR allowed each treaty body only one general comment per year, and, as matters stood, it was difficult to tell whether they would be allowed another in addition to the joint general comment. The Committee was collaborating with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and several non-governmental organizations on possibilities for celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention. Together with the International Institute for Child Rights and Development and the University of Geneva, it was working on plans to hold one event per month in every city in Switzerland.

15. There were still seven countries that allowed death sentences for people who had been under the age of 18 at the time of their crime. The most pressing climate change-related issues for children were clean water, land and air. In that connection, the Committee often drew attention to its observations on children and the business sector and tried to work with Member States to determine how social partners could work together.

16. The simplified reporting procedure was easier for the States parties but harder for the Committee, which had to compile the list of issues before receiving any information from the State. Furthermore, the States had shown very little interest in availing themselves of the procedure.

17. Digital media was a two-edged sword. It could be used to harm children, and it could enable disabled children and children in remote areas to receive an education. Regarding safe schools, she urged States to endorse and abide by the Safe Schools Declaration.

18. With respect to general comment No. 10 (2007) on children's rights in juvenile justice, the Committee would probably revise the recommended minimum age of criminal responsibility upward from 12 to 14. Unfortunately, some countries were tending towards lowering that age, especially for migrant children. No child asked to flee his or her country, and no child should be imprisoned for violating immigration law. The best interests of the migrant child should always be the highest priority.

19. **Ms. de Boer-Buquicchio** (Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material) said that States had a duty to protect migrant children by translating the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration into action. Deploring the rise of xenophobic discourse and the disregard for the fundamental human rights of migrants, she expressed particular concern at the growing numbers of Rohingya child refugees being sold into marriage or sexual exploitation.

20. Her report to the General Assembly (A/73/174) presented a thematic study on combating and preventing the sale and sexual exploitation of children through the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals from a children's rights-based perspective. During the first three sessions of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, insufficient attention had been paid to the rights of children and their protection from violence, including sale and sexual exploitation. Furthermore, the voluntary national reviews had provided little information on the implementation of Goal-related commitments, in part because the review process did not harness existing accountability mechanisms such as the treaty bodies, the special procedures and the universal periodic review. Furthermore, the goal of ending violence against children was insufficiently integrated into development agendas. While children were repeatedly described in national reviews as a particularly vulnerable group, there was a general lack of analysis and disaggregated data regarding efforts to protect them.

21. It was essential to ensure that the next revision of the *Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews* took a human rights-based approach and called for institutionalized national accountability processes that allowed meaningful participation for all groups. For example, the revised *Handbook* should advocate the inclusion of statistical tables based on global and nationally developed indicators, especially in areas where data was lacking. States should be advised to draw systematically on human rights mechanisms and make systematic reference to their recommendations.

22. Data was at the heart of any accountability effort, yet there was little information on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, in part because of its hidden nature and in part because of the lack of dedicated national accountability mechanisms. The Goal indicators presented an opportunity to fill that data void. Top priority should be given to standardizing definitions and categories through the adoption of the *Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse*. The Special Rapporteur stood ready to collaborate in the upcoming reviews of the Goal indicators and in the development of national and regional sets of indicators.

23. States should include information in their voluntary national reviews on expenditures for action plans, coordination mechanisms, and prevention and response services for the protection of children. In addition, they should teach children about the Sustainable Development Goals, especially those that referred to them, and should launch national consultation processes to give children a voice in how the 2030 Agenda was implemented.

24. The review of Goals 8 and 16 during the 2019 session of the high-level political forum would provide a crucial opportunity to ensure that children were not left behind. Furthermore, as the thirtieth anniversary year of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2019 would be an opportune time to integrate children's rights into the 2030 Agenda review and follow-up mechanism.

25. **Ms. Swatz** (South Africa) said that her delegation shared the Special Rapporteur's concerns regarding the absence of standardized categories for the forms of violence against children, and it agreed on the need to integrate ending violence against children into development agendas and to mainstream the protection of their rights across the special procedure system. Despite Government efforts, South African families and communities continued to be plagued by the sale and sexual exploitation of children. Her delegation would therefore be keen to learn from other delegations about how their countries had succeeded in addressing and gathering data on those scourges.

26. South Africa was concerned about the use of the Internet and social media for trafficking in women and children. The industry must work with States to prevent

such abuse, and States must invest resources and enact and implement effective laws.

27. **Ms. Miller** (United Kingdom) said that, as a member of the WePROTECT Global Alliance to End Child Sexual Exploitation Online, the United Kingdom was committed to securing real change. In a recent speech, the Home Secretary had had announced an extra £21 million to bolster the response of national law enforcement agencies and had called for increased industry, government and civil society cooperation. The United Kingdom had pledged £50 million over five years to the Fund to End Violence against Children, beginning in 2016. It had allocated nearly £2.2 million in 2018 to its Child Trafficking Protection Fund, which was testing innovative ways to support trafficked children at home and abroad. Domestically, it had recently announced an additional £2 million to expand the independent child trafficking advocates service. She asked what measures could be taken to encourage States to ratify and implement the Convention and its Optional Protocols.

28. **Mr. McElwain** (United States of America) said that his delegation shared the concern that many Member States were falling short on their shared commitment to end the sale and sexual exploitation of children. The United States worked closely with partner States, civil society and faith-based organizations to combat such crimes through various government agencies and offices, including the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons of the Department of State and the Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section of the Department of Justice. The United States Agency for International Development was currently revising its counter-trafficking in persons policy to prioritize the education and economic empowerment of child survivors. It was also leading a strategy to provide a comprehensive, coordinated response across government. The United States regularly published three detailed documents containing comparable international data on the sale and exploitation of children. He asked what actions stakeholders could take to combat the exploitation of children in the near term.

29. **Mr. Whiteley** (Observer for the European Union), stressing the commitment of the European Union member States to combating all forms of violence against children, said that his delegation would appreciate further information on how a children's rights approach could be applied to the voluntary national reviews and the need for indicator data. It would also like to know how the upcoming thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 2019 focus of the high-level political forum could be used to advance the promotion and protection of children's rights.

30. **Mr. Kelly** (Ireland), urging all States to cooperate fully with the various special procedures, said that Ireland had been pleased to welcome the Special Rapporteur earlier that year and looked forward to receiving her report. He would like to know how Member States could fully integrate the views of children when working to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

31. **Ms. Andújar** (Dominican Republic), noting the Special Rapporteur's visit to her country in 2017 and subsequent recommendations, said that the Dominican Republic had recently enacted a law setting the minimum age of marriage at 18, and it was taking steps to prevent sexual exploitation in the tourism industry and assist the victims, including through a strategic partnership between the entity responsible for tourism security and the National Council on Childhood and Adolescence. It was also working with UNICEF to establish goals for the prevention, investigation and prosecution of commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents and had launched a campaign to encourage reporting. In addition, it was implementing a 2017–2020 national action plan against trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants, and it had joined the WePROTECT Global Alliance to End Child Sexual Exploitation Online.

32. **Mr. De La Mora Salcedo** (Mexico) said that his country had taken significant steps to protect children against all forms of violence by adopting a children's rights law and establishing a national system for their protection. It was a pathfinding country in the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children and a member of the WePROTECT Global Alliance. He would appreciate recommendations for strengthening relationships between international alliances and the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

33. **Ms. de Boer-Buquicchio** (Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material), responding to the representative of South Africa, said that it was indeed important to consider children's rights across all of the Sustainable Development Goals. Cooperation with the private sector was essential not only in the information and communications technologies but also in other areas such as travel and tourism, where child sexual exploitation was on the rise.

34. She welcomed the United Kingdom's strong commitment to eradicating online abuse through the WePROTECT Global Alliance. Regarding ratification

of the Optional Protocols, many countries held back pending necessary legislative or institutional changes. Rather than waiting, they should proceed with those changes in parallel with their preparations for ratification, in order to benefit from the assistance of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

35. She appreciated the work of the numerous United States offices and agencies dealing with issues covered by her mandate, as well as the data they provided on trafficking in children. However, she was concerned about a common misunderstanding of the criminal acts that fell under her mandate. Legally speaking, sale of children and trafficking in children were not the same. To simplify, sale always involved a commercial transaction, while trafficking could be accomplished by deceit, force or abduction. Also, trafficking aimed to exploit the child, while sale might not, as in the case of illegal adoption. Different proofs were required for the two categories of crimes, and cross-border movement was treated differently. Stakeholders should work not only to prevent the sale and exploitation of children but also to provide appropriate assistance for victims.

36. Indicator data was essential to measure progress on ending the sale and exploitation of children. The indicator cluster in the *Handbook on the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography* provided an indication of the kind of data required. It would need to be collected for many different crimes, which should probably be described in more child-friendly language. It should be disaggregated by sex, age, ethnic group and geographical location and should include the number of cases identified, investigated, prosecuted and resulting in convictions. By providing such data, the State also demonstrated that it had a proper accountability system, which was what really mattered. As for celebrations, the best way to mark the anniversary of the Convention would be by ratifying and implementing its Optional Protocols. It was her dream that children's rights would someday gain the same prominence on the international agenda as women's rights had achieved.

37. During her recent visits to the Dominican Republic and Mexico, her interlocutors had attached welcome importance to children's participation in the development of policies and legislation. She hoped that the Dominican Republic had adopted the law establishing 18 as the minimum age of marriage, which had been before parliament during her visit. Responding to the representative of Mexico, she said that international alliances such as the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children and the WePROTECT Global Alliance were very valuable, but she did not know to what extent they contributed to the high-level political forum since she had not yet attended a session. She hoped to attend the next one, which would focus on children's rights.

38. In closing, she encouraged Member States preparing voluntary national reviews to give greater attention to children's rights and, in particular, to the sale and sexual exploitation of children, which had been largely ignored in the reports submitted thus far.

39. *Mr. Kováčik (Slovakia), Vice-Chair, took the chair.*

40. **Mr. Nowak** (Independent expert for the Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty) said that, although he had been appointed to head the Global Study in October 2016, its implementation phase had been delayed until early 2018 because of insufficient funding. He had devoted most of 2017 to fundraising, and with the support of the Group of Friends of the Global Study, approximately $1 million had been raised. However, the Study was operating on essentially one fifth of its total budget, and he once again called on Member States to step up their support.

41. The Global Study was being conducted by a team at the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights, which coordinated nine research groups across all continents and enjoyed the assistance of United Nations agencies and a growing number of non-governmental organizations. A total of six consultations had taken place, and four others would soon follow. In February 2018, OHCHR had sent a questionnaire to the Member States and other stakeholders, which it had followed up with a reminder in June 2018. Noting that only 85 replies had been received, he urged States that had not yet done so to respond quickly.

42. In 2019, the Study would enter its final phase. The research groups would conduct desk research, and the data would be consolidated into different chapters. In March 2019, a final expert meeting would be held to review all of the information gathered. It would include members of the Advisory Board, leads of the different research groups, members of the United Nations Interagency Task Force on the Global Study and, very importantly, children, who were experts in their own rights.

43. He was deeply convinced that the Global Study would have a tremendous impact on the hitherto inadequately addressed situation of children deprived of liberty. With the rise of immigration detention, it was a matter of increasing urgency. The Study aimed to bridge the data gap on the number of children behind bars and raise awareness of the risks for society as a whole. It would also include best practices and evidence-based recommendations. Deprivation of a child's liberty was

more than just a breach of international obligations. It seriously harmed not only the child but also society at large.

44. **Mr. Bastida Peydro** (Spain), noting that his country had responded promptly to the questionnaire, said that the Spanish juvenile justice system complied with the Convention. The system of prison sentences established in the Spanish Penal Code applied only to persons ages 18 or older. Minors under age 14 were not considered criminally responsible, and minors over 14 could be deprived of liberty only if convicted of violence against persons, terrorism, sexual assault or homicide. Children were never detained for immigration violations. He would like to know if the Global Study team had consulted with children deprived of liberty.

45. **Ms. Swatz** (South Africa) said that her country had submitted its initial response and would submit the final one once it had been duly approved. The Global Study had provided an excellent opportunity to take stock of where it stood with regard to children deprived of their liberty. In view of the benefit that all Member States could gain from the Study, her delegation called on all stakeholders to provide the needed human and financial resources.

46. **Ms. Konzett-Stoffl** (Austria) said that Austria had been among the first to contribute financially to the Global Study, and she encouraged others to do so as well. The first regional consultation had taken place in Warsaw under the Austrian chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in the context of the 2017 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. The process of responding to the questionnaire had led to a better understanding of the situation of children deprived of liberty in Austria. Her delegation paid tribute to all of those helping to make the Study possible, particularly the non-governmental organizations that were working pro bono.

47. She asked for further elaboration on the need for data on how many children were deprived of liberty and the reasons and the circumstances of their detention and the need for the data to be gender-specific. In addition, she would like to know how States could be encouraged to complete the questionnaire and whether any of the key actors in the Study could provide assistance.

48. **Mr. De La Mora Salcedo** (Mexico) said that, as his country had indicated in its response to the questionnaire, Mexican juvenile justice law complied with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. His delegation would appreciate recommendations and good practices for preventing the stigmatization of children who had been deprived of liberty and promoting their social reintegration.

49. **Ms. Wagner** (Switzerland), noting that Switzerland had been among the first supporters of the Global Study, said that her delegation was pleased with what had already been accomplished despite insufficient funding and encouraged all Member States to consider contributing to it financially. The Study would provide them with valuable information on the situation of children deprived of liberty and would lay the groundwork for legal, policy and practical recommendations. She wondered if any general trends had already emerged from the Study and whether they confirmed the Independent Expert's initial hypotheses.

50. **Mr. Whiteley** (Observer for the European Union) said that the European Union had contributed €300,000 to the Global Study and had devoted the annual European Forum on the rights of the child to the topic of children deprived of liberty. The European Union Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child addressed the development of alternatives to detention, and its Communication on the protection of children in migration stressed that detention should be used exclusively in exceptional circumstances, where strictly necessary, only as a last resort, for the shortest time possible and never in prison accommodation. He wondered if there were problems specific to migrant children in detention and whether the Study would examine the situation of children who had been sentenced to death. He would also appreciate further information on the data collection work.

51. **Mr. Rohland** (Germany), speaking also on behalf of France, said that France and Germany remained concerned by the deprivation of children's liberty across the globe and looked forward to the presentation of the Global Study in 2019. They were resolved to strengthen their efforts to protect such children and had supported the Study politically, practically and, in the case of Germany, financially.

52. **Mr. Nowak** (Independent expert for the Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty) said that children deprived of liberty had been insufficiently consulted, owing to extremely limited funding. He was grateful to the European Union for having included children in the November 2017 regional consultation, and he hoped that more children would participate in the upcoming consultations in Montevideo, Tunis and Jamaica, as well as in the March 2019 expert meeting, so that the Global Study could reflect the voices of children worldwide. However, children's participation posed ethical, methodological and financial challenges, since it was important to protect them both during and after their participation.

53. The thematic consultation in Pretoria had provided a valuable opportunity to explore the challenges of compiling the data, much of which had never been collected before and would prove useful for South Africa itself. To fill the global data void, he urged all States to complete the questionnaire, despite the level of detail and the problems posed. Help was available, from OHCHR and, especially, the field offices of United Nations agencies. Data gathering should be a joint effort. Furthermore, it should not end with the Study. Up-to-date data and data trends were vital as a basis for meaningful recommendations.

54. The questionnaire asked for sex and age-disaggregated data. Sex-specific data was important to determine, for example, if the percentage of female detainees in the total detainee population was the same for girls as for women and whether it varied with the type of detention.

55. Children deprived of liberty were invariably stigmatized, often for the rest of their lives, with very negative consequences for their development, mental and physical health and social rehabilitation. Therefore, one of the Study's goals was to identify good practices for promoting the social reintegration of children who had been deprived of liberty.

56. Without Switzerland, its first supporter, there would have been no Global Study. He would give very high visibility to it and to all of the States and organizations that were contributing financially, and he hoped that the small Group of Friends would continue to grow. Unfortunately, he had no results to share as yet, since the research teams were only beginning to analyse the replies received.

57. Migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking children had usually been traumatized by their journey and, in the case of refugees, the circumstances from which they were fleeing; depriving them of liberty exacerbated the trauma. He had received information about children who had been sentenced to death for national security-related offences or ordinary crimes. Under both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, children had an absolute right not to be subject to the death penalty.

58. **Mr. Djani** (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that the Committee should focus its deliberations on establishing strong commitments to continued support for global efforts to eradicate poverty and promote health and education; to ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children, and to promoting investment in education and training, particularly in the context of the digital economy. It was committed to strengthening its partnership with the United Nations and would work to ensure that the draft resolution on children was actionable.

59. ASEAN was committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda through ASEAN Community Vision 2025. Its highest priority was to create conditions that would enable the region's children to engage actively, productively and constructively in the region and the world. While the member countries had made great strides in reducing extreme poverty, poverty remained their most persistent challenge.

60. To promote inclusiveness and a greater sense of community in the region, ASEAN had developed a connectivity master plan and was committed to building sustainable food, water and energy infrastructure as well as disability-friendly infrastructure. Its commitment to children's well-being was demonstrated by, inter alia, its regional guidelines on combating trafficking in children, child marriage, online exploitation of children and school bullying. It also emphasized national birth registration, national legislation prohibiting violence against and children and improved protection, support services, rehabilitation and reintegration into the community for victims/survivors.

61. **Ms. Plepytė** (Lithuania), speaking on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic countries, said that violence against children was an issue of the utmost concern. The Nordic and Baltic countries prohibited all forms of violence against children, including corporal punishment, and they encouraged other countries to do the same. They also challenged attitudes and social norms supporting violence through awareness-raising campaigns and partnership with parents, teachers and community leaders.

62. They recognized their obligation to provide inclusive education to children with disabilities, who were more vulnerable to violence, exclusion and discrimination than others. They also recognized the importance of sexuality education, which empowered young people to demand their right to health, enabled them to make informed decisions about their lives and fostered respect for human rights and diversity.

63. The Nordic and Baltic countries had adopted legislation and policies on bullying in schools and had established comprehensive national programmes to strengthen capacity to combat bullying for teachers and other professionals working with children. Measures to prevent cyberbullying must be continually updated in order to keep pace with technology.

64. It was essential to ensure children's access to knowledge and to empower them as agents of change, capable of contributing to the full implementation of their own rights and to the strengthening of the international human rights framework. Engagement of all actors, including children themselves, was necessary to consolidate the notion that children's rights were human rights, as well as to protect those rights.

65. **Mr. Whiteley** (Observer for the European Union), speaking on behalf of the European Union and its member States; the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, reiterated the call for States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to withdraw any reservations to it or its Optional Protocols and to ratify the third Optional Protocol on a communications procedure. The Convention guided European Union policy, legislation and funding programmes. The European Union was committed to ensuring that all children enjoyed their human rights, with special emphasis on disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginalized children, and to combating all forms of violence against children, as evidenced by the European Commission's 10 principles for integrated child protection systems. Through its Europe 2020 strategy, it was stepping up efforts to prevent child poverty, social exclusion and the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

66. The European Union supported initiatives to give all children access to at least 12 years of quality education, and at the international level, it was scaling up funding to ensure that children in humanitarian emergencies had access to education. The Communication on education in emergencies and protracted crises, adopted in May 2018, committed it to supporting safe, inclusive and quality formal and non-formal education for children in protracted crises, as well as alternative pathways for return to education and the integration of displaced children into host-country education systems, including through support to host communities.

67. Mindful of the specific risks of children in situations of armed conflict, the European Union had taken a comprehensive range of measures for their assistance. To combat harmful practices affecting girls, it supported the UNICEF-United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) programmes to end child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation. In September 2017, it had launched the European Union-United Nations Spotlight Initiative, committing €500 million to eliminate violence against women and girls, and it was also leading the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies.

68. The Communication on the protection of children in migration, adopted in April 2017, proposed European Union actions and included recommendations for strengthening the protection of migrant children in member States. The European Union would promote compliance with existing international legal obligations in relation to the rights of children and would uphold the principle of the best interest of the child at all times.

69. The European Union remained committed to supporting anti-trafficking objectives within and outside its borders, including addressing the specific needs of child victims. It would continue to encourage States to criminalize those who knowingly used services exacted from victims of trafficking and to support national authorities in their efforts to step up investigations and prosecutions and enhance law enforcement and judicial cooperation.

70. It continued to support the establishment of child-friendly justice systems and was working with partners to strengthen alternatives to detention. It supported quality alternative care solutions for children deprived of parental care and encouraged efforts to address the root causes of children's separation from their families. Administrative steps would be taken to ensure that every child was property registered and issued with the documents to prove it, without prejudice to the question of permanent residency or acquisition of citizenship.

71. In November 2017, the European Union had participated in the fourth Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour, where it had endorsed the Declaration on Child Labour, Forced Labour and Youth Employment. In the context of the 2030 Agenda, it supported the efforts to end child labour in all its forms by 2025.

72. **Mr. Escalante Hasbún** (El Salvador), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that its member States reaffirmed the Convention on the Rights of the Child as the highest standard for the promotion and protection of the rights of children. While the region was recognized as a leader in that field, its mostly middle-income countries were still working to address vulnerabilities due to poverty, inequality, discrimination, the effects of the global financial crisis, natural disasters, violence, organized crime, people smuggling and drug and human trafficking.

73. Education was a human right, a social investment and one of the most important public goods for

achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Quality education for all was essential to combat inequality and build the human capital needed to turn demographic transitions into dividends that reduced poverty and generated prosperity.

74. The CELAC member States were concerned by the situation of migrant children, particularly unaccompanied minors, and recognized the importance of coordination among countries and international organizations to address the complex reasons for their migration. They condemned the recent policies of separating migrant children from their parents. In accordance with the best interests of the child, migrant children should not be detained.

75. The CELAC countries called on all States to ensure that minority and vulnerable children had access to medical care, social services and education, without discrimination and regardless of migration status, and received appropriate protection and assistance.

76. Violence against children was widespread and had a lasting impact on their lives, generating enormous costs for society. It including the various forms of bullying, from actual violence to social exclusion and cyberbullying. The United Nations syste n should continue to support States' efforts to end bullying of all kinds.

77. International organizations should help States step up their efforts to promote healthy early childhood development by developing early childhood programmes. Stronger international efforts and cooperation on early childhood development and nutrition were needed to break the cycle of poverty and achieve sustainable development.

78. States should ensure that children who were marginalized, vulnerable or subject to stigmatization, discrimination or exclusion could realize their human rights. For all children to realize their rights fully, implementation of the 2030 Agenda was essential. Advancing global efforts to eradicate poverty would require the international community's firm commitment, the mobilization of all necessary resources and a multifaceted approach to the promotion and protection of the children's human rights.

79. **Ms. Wagner** (Switzerland) said that more must be done to close the gender gap in education. Switzerland was concerned about the surge in grave violations of children's rights in conflict. It made ensuring that children could continue their education in protracted emergencies a priority area of its bilateral and multilateral efforts and had recently been elected to the steering group of the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies. It had also been a member of the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children since its establishment in 2015.

80. Switzerland attached great importance to the protection of children's rights in the justice system and to the international standards on juvenile justice. Children deprived of liberty were subject to violence and sexual abuse and often denied their rights to education and health, making them more susceptible to violent extremism. In recent years, a growing number of children had been recruited and exploited by terrorist or violent extremist groups. Switzerland supported the Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty, and it was continuing to work with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to develop guidance materials on dealing with and ensuring justice for recruited or exploited children.

81. **Ms. Oehri** (Liechtenstein) said that the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the global compact on refugees promoted existing international legal obligations in children's rights and upheld the principle of the best interests of the child at all times. However, it was up to the Member States to deliver on their commitments. Recalling that children made up almost a third of human trafficking victims, she urged universal ratification of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. In her latest report (A/73/278), the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict pointed to an increase in the number of verified cases of each of the six grave violations against children. Her delegation reiterated its strong support for the Special Representative's mandate and the need to protect its independence and integrity. Any interference, such as political pressure from Member States, seriously jeopardized the independence and integrity not only of that mechanism but also of all other special procedures.

82. **Ms. Karugu** (Kenya) said that her country reaffirmed its commitment to the Convention and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, as well as to attaining all of the Sustainable Development Goals associated with the protection and promotion of the rights of children. Free and compulsory basic education was a constitutional right, and Kenya currently allocated more than a quarter of the national budget to education. Key policies such as free primary and secondary education and an emphasis on inclusive education had led to improved access, retention and gender equality.

83. The President's new Big Four agenda focused on universal health care, food security, manufacturing and affordable housing, all geared towards improving the well-being of the vulnerable. Kenya had implemented free maternal health care and had expanded comprehensive immunization programs, leading to a reduction in maternal, infant and child mortality. Legislative and institutional mechanisms had been put in place to protect children from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, and a wide range of child-related and child-friendly social protection schemes were being implemented. Both child marriage and female genital mutilation had been criminalized, and female police officers were deployed to respond to cases relating to the abuse of girls. Additionally, an information management system had been set up to centralize children's data in the context of child protection services.

84. **Mr. Antonini** (Italy) said that Italy, the birthplace of the Montessori method of early childhood education, had a long tradition of supporting the principle of the best interest of the child. Children's health, education and social inclusion were core priorities of Italian development cooperation, which focused on improving children's living conditions, protecting them from all forms of abuse and violence and ensuring access to education and early childhood care. Italy developed programmes to provide inclusive education and training, foster talents and assist the most disadvantaged. It also strongly supported UNICEF and UNFPA.

85. His delegation called on the Member States to take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect children from all forms of violence. [Like the others in the core group introducing the annual draft resolution on the rights of the child,] it attached the utmost importance to combating harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

86. Italy was gravely concerned about the recruitment, training and use of children by armed groups, and during its Security Council tenure in 2017, it had endeavoured to ensure the strongest possible safeguards for children in conflict situations. It had also played a leading role in negotiating the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the global compact on refugees. If elected to the Human Rights Council, it would be a strong voice for children's rights.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.

United Nations A/C.3/73/SR.13

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Third Committee

Summary record of the 13th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 10 October 2018, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Shikongo (Vice-Chair) ..... (Namibia)

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In the absence of Mr. Saikal (Afghanistan), Chair, Ms. Shikongo (Namibia), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 70: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/73/41, A/73/174, A/73/257, A/73/265, A/73/272, A/73/276, A/73/278)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (*continued*) (A/73/223))

1. **Ms. al-Mudayhim** (Saudi Arabia) said that said that her country strove to uphold the rights of all children without regard to their ethnicity, colour or religion. Since 2014, more than 13,000 teachers and others working in the education sector had taken part in training courses to help them identify and intervene promptly in cases of child abuse or neglect. Saudi Arabia had also established a committee to study the negative impact on children of video games, established age restrictions for films and video games in order to protect children, and adopted legislation to uphold public decency and morality on the Internet and combat its use for criminal purposes. The National Family Safety Programme had established a centralized online database that contained detailed information on all cases of child abuse and neglect in Saudi Arabia to facilitate efforts to combat it. There was also a 24-hour hotline for reporting suspected cases of child abuse or neglect, and all suspected cases were referred to the competent authorities so that appropriate action could be taken. The Programme was also seeking to combat bullying in schools, inter alia, by providing training to student counsellors so that they could help raise awareness among children of the dangers of bullying and how they should respond to it.

2. Saudi Arabia provided humanitarian assistance to children worldwide and had provided more than $260 million to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre had also provided more than $36 million to combat the cholera epidemic in Yemen and was implementing numerous projects for children in that country, including a project to rehabilitate children forcibly conscripted into Houthi movement militias and facilitate their reintegration into the education system. Furthermore, Syrian and Yemeni children residing in Saudi Arabia were entitled to free education and health-care services. Saudi Arabia would continue to cooperate with the United Nations, the international community and all other relevant stakeholders in the area of children's rights.

3. **Ms. Rodríguez Camejo** (Cuba) said that, despite the progress made to protect children against discrimination and inequality, if the prevailing international economic order persisted, by 2030, 167 million children would live in extreme poverty, 69 million children would die of curable diseases and 60 million children would be deprived of education. Cuba had created inter-sectoral national policies and programmes in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which spanned the areas of health, education, disability, and sports and culture. Cuba had received recognition from United Nations agencies, funds and programmes for its work on child and adolescent development, which had been a national priority since the 1959 Cuban Revolution. Of note were the country's network of shelters for homeless children and, in the first half of 2018, the achievement of its lowest recorded infant mortality rates. Cuba was also the first country to have eliminated mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS and syphilis, as confirmed by the World Health Organization.

4. Such successes were the product of Cuba's universal and free health, education and social welfare systems, to which the Parliament dedicated half of the national budget. That was despite the serious impact of the economic, financial and commercial embargo imposed on the Cuban people by the United States of America for over half a century, which had a particularly harmful effect on the country's children. The worst form of violence against children was to deny them the right to life, health, food, education, culture and a safe world.

5. **Ms. Miyazaki** (Japan) said that her country's commitment to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 16, Target 2, and addressing violence against children was embodied in its strong support for the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children. Japan was one of its pathfinding countries, which had committed to accelerating national actions to end violence against children. Her Government had also joined the Board of the Partnership and was the first to donate to the Partnership initiative to prevent violence in humanitarian settings, contributing $5.9 million to support 12 projects in conflict settings in Nigeria and Uganda. Those projects sought to enable children to leave armed groups; provide vocational training and psychological support; and prevent children from experiencing further harm from land mines.

6. At the national level measures had been taken to monitor bullying and violence against children and protect them from those practices. In particular, the Government published an annual survey documenting

the number of recognized cases of bullying, including cyberbullying, and since 2015, it had held a national summit with the aim of promoting diverse and creative efforts to address the issue of bullying across the country. Japan had also established a 24-hour hotline for primary and secondary school students to seek help and guidance on the issue.

7. **Mr. Tenya** (Peru) said that his delegation supported the Secretary-General's recommendations to increase national, regional and international efforts to eradicate child, early and forced marriage, which violated the rights of girls. Peru had recently demonstrated its commitment to implementing the Convention at the international level by signing the Safe Schools Declaration, through which States expressed political support for the continuance of education and the protection of students, teachers and schools during armed conflict. Peru had also joined the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children and a United Kingdom-led initiative to support education for girls.

8. At the national level, Peru was implementing a national actional plan for children which set out goals and guidelines for each State sector. A key objective under the general State plan was to reduce anaemia rates in children aged 6 to 35 months and ensure the protection of children from violence. The Ministry of Education had launched a programme to enable anyone, including children themselves, to report incidents of violence in school, and was working to ensure girls' equal access to education, in particular their timely school enrolment and continued attendance. The Government was also implementing a national strategy to eradicate child labour and remained committed to the monitoring and implementation of national policies on the promotion and protection of children's rights. The protection of the rights of the most vulnerable, including children with disabilities and child refugees, should remain a priority.

9. **Mr. Lafta** (Iraq) said that Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) had committed grave violations of the rights of children in his country, particularly following its seizure of Mosul in June 2014. The Iraqi Government was working closely with a number of international organizations to protect all children from terrorism and violence. It had adopted a comprehensive national policy on the protection of children, including children in liberated areas, and was seeking to raise public awareness of children's rights and the provisions of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. His Government had established a children's parliament to encourage children to express their opinions and facilitate their full involvement in public life. It was striving to ensure that all children in Iraq received a high-quality education and was strengthening social safety nets with a view to ensuring that all children could fully enjoy their rights, irrespective of the economic status of their families.

10. Iraq had established a national committee on the rights of women and children as well as a high-level interministerial committee on monitoring and reporting abuses of the rights of children, which had recently held two meetings with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. The interministerial committee was also working with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and UNICEF to formulate a plan of action for ending all abuses of children's rights in conflict areas. Iraq had determined the nationalities of foreign children in liberated areas and was endeavouring to provide medical and psychological care while arranging for their repatriation.

11. Under the amended personal status law, child and early marriage was illegal in Iraq. The recruitment of children into the armed forces was also prohibited, and all new recruits must be at least 18 years of age. Iraq would continue its efforts to ensure that it complied fully with all international instruments on children's rights to which it was a party.

12. **Ms. Lodhi** (Pakistan) said that growing inequalities, spurred on by protracted conflicts, foreign occupation and cyclical spikes in violence, continued to deprive the poorest and most excluded children from receiving essential health and education services. From Syria to Palestine to India-occupied Jammu and Kashmir, children living in areas affected by conflicts and foreign occupations, of neither their choosing nor making, were more at risk of targeted attacks, sexual violence, forced conscription and indiscriminate killing than at any other time in history. The special session on children, held in 2002, had been an important step towards protecting and promoting the rights of children, regardless of nationality, ethnicity or religion. Furthermore, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognized children as agents of change in support of sustainable development.

13. Pakistan had been one of the earliest signatories to the Convention and its first two Optional Protocols. Pakistan had also ratified all International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions on child labour, and a national commission for child welfare and development had been established to monitor and promote children's rights, in close collaboration with UNICEF. Legislation to establish institutions for the protection of children

from abuse, exploitation, neglect and violence had also recently been approved in the Parliament.

14. **Mr. Chernenko** (Russian Federation) said that the protection of children, who were the most vulnerable group in society, should be a major priority for every State. It was thus regrettable that the Convention had not been universally ratified. The particular attention devoted to the promotion and protection of children by the Russian Federation was evident in its social policies, which included the State family policy, the national security strategy and the national strategy for children. In 2017, the President had decreed 2018–2027 the Decade of Childhood. The coordinating committee for the Decade of Childhood would lead efforts to enhance financial support for families with children, improve health care, increase access to quality education, promote cultural and physical education and ensure equal opportunities for children requiring special care. The Government was concerned by the growing trend among European countries of replacing the concept of a mother and father with the idea of children having a "parent 1" and "parent 2". That shift in definition of parenthood undermined historic traditional cultural and family values and caused irreparable harm to children. At its seventy-eighth session in May 2018, the Committee on the Rights of the Child had examined the initial report of the Russian Federation on the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The Government would take into account the resulting recommendations in the preparation of its sixth and seventh combined report under the Convention, to be submitted in 2019.

15. **Mr. Visonnavong** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that his Government had recently shared with the international community its progress towards implementing the Convention and its Optional Protocols during the presentation of its combined third through sixth periodic report under the Convention at the seventy-ninth session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. At the regional level, his Government had contributed to institution-building and standard-setting initiatives within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), notably as a participant in the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children, leading the Commission's regional study on laws, policies and practices relating to the identification, management and treatment of victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children. Together with fellow ASEAN member States, the Lao People's Democratic Republic also endeavoured to implement the ASEAN declarations on human rights and on the elimination on violence against children, and its anti-trafficking convention.

16. **Ms. Nguyen** Lien Huong (Viet Nam) said that her Government was particularly concerned about the prevalence of child marriage, which stunted the physical and psychological development of young girls and their children and limited their education and employment prospects. In Viet Nam, even though the minimum legal age of marriage in the country was 18 for women and 20 for men, child marriage was practiced among ethnic minorities. That was attributable to the high poverty rates and traditional customs of those communities. In 2015, the Prime Minister had put forward a ten-year plan to eradicate child marriage, which set a target to reduce the child marriage rate by 2 to 3 per cent annually. The plan focused on awareness-raising activities aimed at changing marriage practices. Fifteen provinces with the highest child marriage rates had been selected to implement a pilot programme. Activities under the plan had also been integrated into national programmes on education, gender equality, and population and family planning to ensure far-reaching effects.

17. Viet Nam was one of the first countries to ratify the Convention and had since made continuous efforts to improve the related domestic legal framework. For example, the 2016 law on children set out guiding principles to guarantee children's rights, such as the inclusion of non-discrimination and the best interests of the child in all decisions affecting children. The law also increased the number of children's rights covered and expanded the scope of application to non-Vietnamese children residing in Viet Nam. In order to ensure that policies were relevant and responsive, the Government organized a biannual children's forum, which served as an important platform to hear children's views, desires and aspirations on issues that affected them. The recommendations of the forum were then sent to relevant ministries and agencies for consideration and incorporation into policy.

18. **Ms. Gebrekidan** (Eritrea) said that children in Eritrea faced many of the challenges common to developing countries including lack of access to quality education, health care and a social safety net. As a result, in its social and economic policies, the Government aimed to promote a dignified life through equal access to national resources in all sectors of society, with a hefty investment in children. In close cooperation with national civil society organisations, parents, and community and religious leaders, the Government was implementing an action plan on children which focused on preventing child homelessness, juvenile violent crime and school dropout; and eradicating female genital mutilation, child marriage and the abandonment

of infants. The plan approached the family as a core unit that ensured the well-being of the child and set out various schemes to provide families with additional sources of income. The plan had also strengthened social protection programmes to support orphans and children with disabilities. The prevalence of female genital mutilation had been reduced from 95 per cent in 1995 to less than 10 per cent.

19. Eritrea had acceded to the ILO Convention concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment in 1999. The Government strategy to eliminate child labour involved legislation, advocacy campaigns and development programmes, taking into account the conditions in poor rural areas. It carried out strict inspections to ensure no children under the age of 18 years engaged in occupations that jeopardized their physical, psychological, spiritual or social development. In 2015–2016, some 1500 establishments had been assessed, of which 142 had received a warning and 78 had been reported for legal action. An analysis of a labour force survey had recently been concluded, which would assist in drafting a national decent work programme. Children should not be viewed as merely vulnerable persons requiring protection; they should also be empowered to expand their creativity, express their opinion and develop their personality.

20. **Mr. Baror** (Israel) said that the rights of children should be championed to promote innovation and discovery. Israel had a long tradition of non-formal education that fostered youth leadership and reinforced children's personal growth, teamwork and political participation. That non-formal education took place through the framework of 15 afterschool youth movements, of which 30 per cent of all Israeli school students were members. The youth movements played an essential role in the country's democracy, representing the plurality of Israeli society and providing students with a space to voice their opinions freely and collectively. Youth movement members also carried out volunteer work with vulnerable populations. He reiterated the importance of non-formal education in Israel in teaching children to engage in constructive dialogue, navigate their surroundings, and nurture empathy and integrity.

21. **Mr. Belman Guerrero** (Mexico), speaking as a youth delegate, said that his Government's national system for the protection of children, established through major legislation on the rights of children adopted in 2014, had produced extensive insights into the desires, needs and opportunities available to the more than 40 million children and adolescents in the country, in particular those in vulnerable situations. Mexico was also participating as a pathfinding country in the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, developing a national roadmap to eradicate violence against children, which involved all levels of Government and recognized the need for children's participation in the decisions affecting them. Furthermore, the Government was integrating international best practices into education and social welfare services to ensure they were of high quality and had a direct positive impact on children and adolescents. With regard to the draft resolution on the rights of children to be submitted to the Committee, he drew attention to the need to ensure respect for the rights of migrant and indigenous children.

22. **Mr. Sukhee** (Mongolia) said that the promotion and protection of the rights of children was a key priority of the Government of Mongolia. It had developed a 2016–2021 programme of action which reflected its Sustainable Development Vision 2030, the national plan to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals into policy. Major legislation affecting children had entered into force since 2016, including laws to provide assistance to single parents, foster youth development and establish childcare service centres to support working women. Furthermore, in 2017, a five-year national programme on child development and protection had been launched and the national human rights commission had presented its annual report, resulting in the adoption by the Parliament of a resolution to improve school conditions for ethnic minorities and children with disabilities and promote gender equality through better implementation of legislation. The Government had set a goal to address by 2030 the challenges relating to the promotion and protection of children's rights faced by its capital city, Ulaanbaatar, including a shortage of kindergartens, the overcrowding of family hospitals and the harmful health impacts of air pollution. In that regard, implementation of existing legislation and strategies remained the prevailing challenge.

23. **Mr. Tripathi** (India) said that India was home to 472 million children under the age of 18, comprising nearly one fifth of all children in the world. The Constitution had extensive provisions to promote the rights of children and support their development and welfare. The national policy for children, grounded in a rights-based approach, focused on survival, health and nutrition; education and development; protection; and participation. Periodic review of all policies on children's rights was undertaken by a national commission for the protection of children.

24. Modern technology was being used to improve the scope and efficiency of the universal immunization programme, while a range of programmes aimed to

safeguard the physical and psychological health of adolescents, with special attention devoted to girls. In the area of education, the Constitution provided for free and compulsory education for children up to the age of 14. A meal scheme in schools aimed to foster the universal enrolment and retention of children, while private schools reserved 25 per cent of seats for children from low-income sectors. To address the imbalance in the child sex ratio, a programme had been introduced to conduct public education campaigns, closely monitor sex-selective abortions and encourage the education of girls. A robust legal framework provided for the protection of children from sexual assault, sexual harassment, pornography and trafficking. Government agencies and civil society worked together to implement relevant legal provisions to safeguard the rights of children and juveniles alleged to be in conflict with the law, as well as those in need of care and protection.

25. **Mr. de Souza Monteiro** (Brazil) said that protecting children from violence resulting from conflict, poverty and a lack of adequate child-sensitive policies was essential to the achievement of peace and just societies, as recognized in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In that regard, international and regional partnerships that brought together Governments, civil society and the private sector were crucial. In Brazil, a legislative framework for the protection of children had been adopted in 2012. It safeguarded the rights of child victims and witnesses of violence; the right to be raised free from corporal punishment and other degrading or cruel treatment; and provided for the prevention and suppression of trafficking in persons, especially children, and the protection of migrant children.

26. Concerning migrant children, he underscored his Government's support for measures that prohibited collective expulsions, ended child detentions and prevented arbitrary arrests. A child's interests should be given high priority and not be just one of many considerations, given that every child had the right to have his or her best interests be a primary consideration in any action concerning them. All migration laws, policies and practices should be individually assessed in order to take into account children's best interests.

27. Brazil had been an active participant in the global discussions on combating child labour. Between 1992 and 2015, the number of children and adolescents working in Brazil had decreased by 80 per cent. The Government maintained a special focus on reducing the burden on girls to carry out unpaid domestic and care work, which affected their education and employment prospects. The Government valued the participation and contribution of children, particularly those in vulnerable situations, to the planning of policies, including programmes focused on development and the empowerment of girls. Data to ensure the success of gender-responsive and child-sensitive policies was critical.

28. **Mr. Gonzalez** (Colombia) said that his Government had launched a 2018–2030 national policy on children and adolescents which aimed to support their comprehensive development; foster conditions that ensured their well-being and equal access to opportunities; and support their participation in the transformation of the country. At same time, a policy seeking to strengthen the capacities of families while recognizing them as holders of collective rights and agents of social change had been established. In 2017, Colombia's primary institution responsible for the promotion and protection of the rights of children and families had adopted a differentiated rights approach in order take into account gender, disability, ethnic identity, and sexual and gender orientation in all its activities. His Government considered investment in children under the age of six to be particularly vital, given the critical physical and psychological developments that took place in the first six years of life, and the resulting positive social impact of such investment. In that regard, a law on early childhood, adopted in 2016, set out State policy on comprehensive early childhood development which aimed to facilitate access to appropriate human, social and material conditions.

29. While there had been progress in terms of reducing the number of children in situations of armed conflict, the Government continued efforts to eradicate the recruitment of children. It remained steadfast in its commitment to prevent children from being used in situations of conflict and devote special attention to indigenous children, children of African descent and those living in marginalized areas. Bullying and cyberbullying should be addressed using a comprehensive and inclusive approach that contributed to the elimination of discrimination based on gender, disability and ethnicity. Lastly, statistical systems should be strengthened given their vital role in the formulation of policy.

30. **Mr. Gutiérrez Segú Berdullas** (Spain) said that his Government remained firmly committed to fulfilling its obligations under the Convention and its three Optional Protocols. Furthermore, its international cooperation policy on development included specific funding and activities related to the promotion of children's rights. The Committee on the Rights of the Child had considered Spain's combined fifth and sixth periodic reports at its seventy-seventh session held in

2018. The Government was taking into consideration the Committee's concluding observations in its current policy development process, including a draft bill on the comprehensive protection of children from violence, which sought to strengthen the relevant public institutions, and the third national strategic plan on childhood 2019–2022, which provided for children's participation in public life and attention to vulnerable groups. Spain had conducted a voluntary national review, which included the protection of children's rights, within the framework of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. In 2019, Spain would host the Third International Conference on Safe Schools, a discussion which would be guided by the framework of the Safe Schools Declaration. The protection of children in situations of armed conflict was a priority of the Government, which emphasized the need for a gender perspective and the protection of education in initiatives addressing the issue.

31. **Ms. Turner** (Jamaica) said that her Government continued to work to fulfil Sustainable Development Goal 16, Target 2, on the elimination of all forms of violence against children. In that regard, it had participated in the first 2030 Agenda for Children: End Violence Solutions Summit held in February 2018 and had remained strongly engaged in the work of the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, acting as one of the pathfinding countries since July 2016. The Government had also adopted a 2018 amendment to the law on child care and protection and finalised the national action plan for an integrated response to children and violence and a related roadmap. Jamaica had developed an anti-bullying response framework and had contributed to the Secretary General's report on Protecting Children from Bullying (A/73/265). The Government had recently merged two child protection entities in order to create a single child protection and family services agency. The merger aimed to improve efficiency in the use of resources and the timeliness of service delivery and increase the number of staff in field services.

32. In December 2018, Jamaica would host the regional Caribbean conference of the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, welcoming partners from both the Caribbean and other regions. As the co-chair of the Group of Friends on Children and the Sustainable Development Goals, her delegation emphasized the need for greater opportunities to exchange views, experiences and best practices among Member States, and the importance of partnerships. In that regard, in May 2018, Governments of Jamaica and the United States of America had signed a Child Protection Compact Partnership aimed at reducing child trafficking. In June 2018, the Country-Level Engagement and Assistance to Reduce Child Labour project had been launched with the support of Winrock International and Lawyers without Borders.

33. **Ms. Ruminowicz** (Poland) said that the text of the Convention had been profoundly influenced by the concept of children's essential humanity pioneered by the Polish writer Janusz Korczak. Indeed, Poland had been one of the States driving the creation of the Convention. Its current efforts to implement the Convention focused on the prevention of all forms of violence against children. At the national level, Poland had a solid legal framework on the protection children's rights, implemented in part through the children's ombudsman office, which operated as an independent State body and in line with its Constitution and the Convention. Corporal punishment had been prohibited since 2010. In 2016, the Government had launched a programme to provide financial support to families with children. Migrant children were treated with special care and in accordance with Poland's commitments under international law, including the Convention. Under Polish law, unaccompanied migrants were offered legal representation, decent living conditions and social assistance. Nevertheless, the Government recognized that the most important action in respect of migrant children was to support family reunification and took all necessary measures to that end.

34. Efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development must include children's perspectives, given that they were often the group most affected by poverty, homelessness, violence, neglect and unequal access to education. Such implementation should also leverage the linkages between the rights of children as defined by existing legal instruments and the Sustainable Development Goals.

35. **Mr. Molina Linares** (Guatemala) said that by striving to provide children with adequate health and education services and guarantee their protection from violence, exploitation and discrimination, Member States could not only prevent the projected 70 million deaths of children under the age of 5 by the year 2030, but also contribute to sustainable development and reduce the costs associated with ill health and low productivity.

36. Given its geographic location in the path of migration flows heading north and its economic and institutional challenges, like other countries in the region, Guatemala was highly vulnerable to the problem of trafficking in persons. As migration flows had intensified in recent years, Guatemala had become an origin, transit and destination country for international

trafficking, which had led to the spread of that criminal practice at the national level. Of particular concern was the scourge of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, which especially affected women, children and adolescents. Physical and psychological trauma, sexually-transmitted diseases, chronic malnutrition, social isolation, drug addiction, and even suicide or death at the hands of traffickers or their clients were among the devastating effects of that crime. Trafficking was a form of modern slavery and the international community must remain resolute in its joint efforts to eradicate it.

37. Guatemala's national development plan included specific initiatives to support children's development and create opportunities for them to grow up free from violence and able to fully exercise their rights, as envisioned by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Government had submitted its fifth and sixth combined report under the Convention to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in January 2018.

38. **Mr. Issetov** (Kazakhstan) said that his Government considered the security and safety of children to be a primary requisite for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the new agenda for peace. That was evident in its national plan, Kazakhstan 2050, and other policies. A committee for the protection of children's rights had been constituted under the Ministry of Education with the aim of ensuring children's social rights and legal guarantees. That initiative was implemented in all regions of the country, with a focus on children's moral and spiritual development and access to well-qualified child welfare experts. Forward-looking legislation had been adopted since Kazakhstan had acceded to the Convention in 1994. New laws provided for shelters for homeless youth, with provisions for guardianship and adoption; support for children with disabilities; the prevention of crime, neglect and homelessness among children; and the prevention of child labour, in accordance with ILO provisions. Efforts were also underway to combat the abuse, exploitation and trafficking of children.

39. The Committee on the Rights of the Child had recognized the strides made by Kazakhstan in respect of its legislation, services and programmes, and its cooperation with international organizations and civil society. The Government had established an ombudsman for children and ensured their participation in all matters concerning them. Despite the downward-turning global economic trends, Kazakhstan had continued to provide the same and sometimes even an increased level of social support and protection. Measurement of Millennium Development Goal targets had confirmed that the country's infant and maternal mortality rates had decreased, in part through improved nutrition and immunization campaigns. The Government emphasized recreation, sports and culture to ensure the holistic development of youth.

40. Kazakhstan collaborated closely with UNICEF with a view to providing leadership and serving as a partner to other Central Asian countries through its proposed United Nations regional centre, which would focus on sustainable development, disaster risk reduction and building resilience, with children's rights as a priority. Kazakhstan also provided humanitarian assistance to children during disasters and natural catastrophes through its national development agency.

41. **Ms. Hasan** (Indonesia) said that the provision of timely vaccinations and proper nutrition were some of the most important interventions for saving children's lives. Such activities had been facilitated around the world thanks to international cooperation. Her Government was deeply committed to creating an environment that allowed children to thrive and contribute to society. In that regard, democracy, the principle of unity in diversity and the spirit of mutual cooperation were key elements. The Government continued to reduce the poverty level and to support poor families, including through the national health insurance system. The goal of achieving a zero stunting rate was a major priority. A national programme to reduce stunting was active in 100 districts and 1,000 villages. Twenty million children living in poverty were attending school owing to a Government subsidy programme for children 6 to 21 years of age. Indonesia was also a pathfinding country in the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children.

42. **Mr. Zambrano Ortiz** (Ecuador) said that Goals 4, 5 and 16, relating to, respectively, quality education, gender equality, and the promotion of just, peaceful and inclusive societies, could only be achieved when all States comprehensively protected children. People under the age of 18 comprised 36 per cent of Ecuador's population. The Constitution therefore recognized children as a priority group and designated the State as responsible for protecting them and ensuring their holistic development and the full exercise of their rights while taking into consideration the principle of the child's best interest and its precedence over the interests of others. The Constitution also provided for children's right to physical and psychological integrity; to an identity, name and citizenship; to comprehensive health and nutrition; education and culture, sports, and recreation; social security; to have a family and enjoy peaceful coexistence with family and community; to social participation; and to respect for their freedom and dignity. Efforts to achieve equity for children included a

programme based on a model of joint responsibility, focused on early childhood.

43. Recalling that the international community was on the eve of the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention and the tenth anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, he reaffirmed his Government's commitment to strengthening and guaranteeing respect for children's rights. He called for a focus on Goal 3, Target 2, to end the preventable deaths of children under 5, and Goal 4, Target 1, on the provision of quality primary and secondary education.

44. **Ms. Shange-Buthane** (South Africa) said that, since the dawn of democracy in South Africa, her Government had taken a deliberate policy decision to give the highest priority to the protection of the rights of the child, in particular those of the girl child and children with disabilities. In that regard, the Government was drafting the third amendment to the children's act; revising the 2019–2024 national plan of action for children; drafting a new child participation framework; and finalising consultations concerning the 2019–2024 programme of action addressing violence against women and children, focusing on prevention, protection and support services. South Africa would submit its response to the list of issues received from the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and would report to that Committee in November 2018. It had also provided its first draft response to the Independent Expert for the United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of their Liberty. All of those policies, laws and submissions were aimed at supporting South Africa's implementation of the Convention and other international and regional obligations. The Government had taken a consultative, inclusive and transparent multi-stakeholder approach to the various review processes to ensure collective responsibility and ownership over them.

45. Most of South Africa's historically disadvantaged children remained socially excluded. As the divide between rich and poor continued to grow, children from the poorest households faced poverty, inadequate nutrition, poor quality education and limited prospects to access tertiary education. In response, the Government had introduced free higher education and training for disadvantaged students. Children in low-income communities were also affected by substance abuse. Her Government thus requested that future United Nations reports on children's rights elaborate on the problem of substance abuse and provide guidance and best practices on how communities and families could be equipped to deal with that scourge and its impact on children.

46. With regard to the continued practice of child labour, her Government wished to draw attention to the concerns raised by Alliance 8.7, a global partnership that aimed to eradicate modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour. Those concerns encapsulated its reasons for pursuing the elaboration of a legally binding instrument to regulate the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises and hold them accountable for violations against children, which in many cases were taking place with impunity.

47. **Ms. Kipiani** (Georgia) said that the protection of the rights of children was one of the foremost priorities of Georgia. In order to ensure coherent policy and effective coordination among State institutions, in December 2016 the Government had established an inter-agency commission responsible for implementation of the Convention and its Optional Protocols. Georgia was a member of the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, participating as a pathfinding country. A juvenile justice code had entered into force in 2016, and several laws had been adopted to ensure provision of identification documents to children living in the streets, thereby facilitating their access to public services. Since 2017, the Parliament had been drafting a code on children's rights, which, once adopted, would bridge the gaps in existing legislation and contribute to the effective implementation of the State's human rights obligations, including those enshrined in the Convention.

48. The deteriorating humanitarian and human rights situation in the occupied regions of Georgia was a matter of concern, in particular the situation of children facing violence and discrimination by the occupying regime on a daily basis. Given the absence of international monitoring mechanisms within those territories, children were deprived of their right to education in their native language and the right to freedom of movement. Since 2015, the occupying regime in Sokhumi and Tskhinvali had been closing Georgian schools or changing the language of instruction into Russian, which had had negative effects on the academic performance of schoolchildren in the districts of Gali and Akhalgori. That linguistic discrimination constituted yet another attack against the identity and dignity of the ethnic Georgian population in the occupied regions. Moreover, the closing of so-called crossing points along the occupation line had further restricted freedom of movement and worsened the humanitarian situation on the ground, in particular for children, who were prevented from crossing the

occupation line to attend school in Georgian-controlled territory. For its part, the Government of Georgia had launched a new peace initiative, "A Step to a Better Future", which aimed to facilitate access to all levels of education for residents of the conflict-affected Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions in Georgian-controlled territory. The international community must ensure that its efforts to realize the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development did not leave behind children in conflict-affected areas.

49. **Ms. Fareena** (Maldives) said that her Government had established specialized units within mainstream schools across the country to ensure equal opportunities for schooling for children with disabilities. Furthermore, persons with disabilities, including children, received financial and other forms of assistance, including equipment and housing. Regarding the protection of the right to health, the infant mortality rate in the country had been reduced from 121 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1977 to just 6 in 2016, while vaccine-preventable diseases were non-existent.

50. Concerning child protection structures, family and children service centres were maintained in all of the country's 19 atolls. Those centres had child-friendly interview rooms and temporary shelters for women and child victims of domestic abuse. A registry of convicted child sex offenders was also published online. Seeking to provide multiple avenues to report instances of violence and to streamline that process, the Government had established 24-hour, toll-free call centre and launched a mobile application that allowed anyone, children included, to report cases anonymously. Schools aimed to foster a culture of respect and tolerance with the aim of shaping global citizens and preventing bullying. Specific programmes to empower the girl child focused on encouraging and motivating girls to achieve their goals and become decision-makers. An initiative to improve coordination among various Government agencies and thereby enhance child protection had produced a national child protection database, which strengthened the referral mechanisms between the Ministry of Gender and Family and the Maldives police service and generated real-time, disaggregated and evidence-based data. Further, the Ministry of Education oversaw a policy information system, whereby school attendance was monitored to identify and follow up on possible cases of concern.

51. **Mr. Mohd Nasir** (Malaysia) said that massive urbanization in Malaysia had created economically and socially disadvantaged urban zones. Children in such areas often lacked access to health care and education, were vulnerable to exploitation and had limited prospects. The Government therefore devoted its utmost attention to children's access to education, with the goals of increasing school enrolment and completion rates. The Ministry of Education provided free textbooks to all students and had established a trust fund for poor students and a supplementary food programme. The Government also implemented various strategies to facilitate access to education for indigenous children, students with special needs, young prisoners, juvenile offenders, and undocumented children. In 2017, the national rate of completion of primary school was 98 per cent, while secondary school completion rate was 91 per cent. Malaysia had also achieved gender parity in enrolment. The Government would continue to strive to ensure universal access and full enrolment for all children from preschool to the upper secondary school level by 2020.

52. Domestic legislation had been introduced to protect children from child labour, sexual exploitation and trafficking. That included a law on youth employment, a law to combat trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants, and a law on sexual offences against children. Malaysia was a party to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. The Convention had influenced national efforts to reduce infant and child mortality, accelerate girls' education, and increase access to education for children living in remote areas.

53. **Ms. Inanç Örnekol** (Turkey) said that her Government had taken major steps in recent years to improve the legal and institutional framework to protect the rights of children and improve their living conditions. Children were among the groups afforded special protection by constitutional amendments adopted in 2010. Ensuring education opportunities for all children and closing the gender gap in all spheres of life for the girl child remained central priorities.

54. At the international level, Turkey was a party to the Convention and its first two Optional Protocols and had signed the third Optional Protocol concerning a communications procedure in 2012. It had also ratified the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse and the Council of Europe Convention on Contact concerning Children. The rights and well-being of children in situations of conflict and crisis needed to be considered. Unfortunately, the challenges to doing so had been intensified by violations such as the recruitment and use of children, mass abductions, torture and sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the prevention of humanitarian access, which had become patterns of conflict. The international

community must display joint and robust political determination and action to address that situation.

55. The large movement of millions of migrants and refugees across borders was a major humanitarian crisis and required the international community to redouble its efforts to address the needs of displaced children. Turkey hosted more refugees than any other country, and in that regard, had shared its experience in strengthening the resilience and well-being of more than one million Syrian children in the country. Syrian children were enrolled in Turkey's public schools and in 318 temporary education centres dedicated specifically to them. The Government addressed all of their material needs and provided cash assistance for every Syrian child attending school as well as conditional education assistance based on school attendance. Those efforts had helped increase the schooling ratio, with enrolment reaching 65 per cent in the 2017–2018 school year. However, the establishment of new schools and employment of new teachers was urgently needed, particularly given that Syrian children would be the ones to rebuild their country. In that regard, she called on the international community to act in conformity with the principle of joint responsibility and burden-sharing.

56. **Ms. Salim** (Afghanistan) said that the violence imposed on Afghanistan had had a devastating effect on its people, in particular children. Proxy forces from abroad had sought to sow discord within Afghan society, inflicting severe trauma on its children. A recent attack on an educational centre Kabul illustrated the types of atrocities committed by those forces. Terrorists were exploiting children by abducting and brainwashing them outside of Afghanistan to carry out suicide attacks. In 2017 alone, 3,179 children had been killed or maimed as a result of the war. The Government nevertheless remained committed to protecting the rights of children. Recent initiatives included the adoption of a child protection policy by the Ministry of Defence; the establishment of a secretariat for children within the Ministry of Labour; the amendment of the law on trafficking in persons; the development of a strategy and action plan to eliminate child labour; and the amendment of legislation in order to facilitate the issuance of identification cards to children whose parents were unknown.

57. According to UNICEF, 75 per cent of the 3.5 million children out of school in the country were girls, a disparity that was exacerbated by limited access to services in rural areas. To support the empowerment of girls, the Government had raised the legal age of marriage to 18, resulting in 10 per cent decline in child marriages. Eleven schools had been created for children with disabilities across the country, while the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation had enabled more than two million internally displaced children to return to school.

58. In the course of a decade the infant mortality rate had declined from 25.7 per cent to 2.2 per cent, and the number of births assisted by health professionals had risen from 20 per cent to 40 per cent. The Ministry of Public Health had recently established 924 malnutrition treatment centres across the country, which had thus far provided treatment to 162,000 children suffering from severe malnutrition. The Government was also dedicated to implementing a comprehensive plan to prevent the recruitment of child soldiers and enable juvenile offenders to reintegrate into society. It would also continue to enforce the new penal code that criminalized the sexual abuse of children and increase the number of the child protection units within the national police centres.

59. **Ms. Andújar** (Dominican Republic) said that the ratification of the Convention in 1991 had helped the Dominican Republic build a system for the protection and promotion of children's rights. Internationally, despite great progress made under the Convention, mechanisms to ensure accountability for the violation of children's rights were needed, as were concrete policies to ensure children's access to education, protection from armed conflict and the opportunity to develop without discrimination. In that regard, the Dominican Republic had a policy framework that supported and integrated the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

60. The Government devoted particular attention to early childhood programmes. Since 2015, nearly 130,000 children under the age of 5 had attended Government day-care facilities, while a centre dedicated to children with disabilities provided diagnostic and rehabilitation services. In 2017 the legislature had passed a law to prohibit child marriage and set the minimum legal marriage age at 18. The President had proclaimed 11 October as the National Day of the Girl Child, recognizing the critical role the empowerment of and investment in girls played in the achievement of sustainable development. The Government was working with UNICEF on a project to establish community roundtables to address the issue of the commercial sexual exploitation of children. It had also re-launched a campaign to promote the reporting of that crime and had joined the WePROTECT Global Alliance to end child sexual exploitation online. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children had supported the drafting of a national roadmap to prevent and eliminate violence against children. That process had also involved civil society and youth, and its implementation foresaw the participation of affected groups, in particular the most

vulnerable. The roadmap included a national campaign to provide families and communities with tools to use positive discipline techniques and thus reduce violence against children. Lastly, the national council on children and adolescents was coordinating a census with the aim of protecting the 10,000 children living in the streets.

61. **Ms. Al-Mawlawi** (Qatar) said that the annual report of the Special Representative on Violence against Children (A/73/276) made clear that considerable progress had been achieved by the international community in its efforts to protect children from violence. Further efforts were needed, however, in order to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 16, target 2, and ensure that all children grew up free from violence, abuse and exploitation. Qatar continued to provide support to a number of United Nations agencies working to combat violence against children, and had recently concluded an agreement with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed conflict that had provided for the establishment in Doha of a United Nations centre on children in armed conflict, which would facilitate efforts to address the plight of children in conflict situations throughout the region.

62. In line with Qatar National Vision 2030 and the new national development strategy, Qatar had enacted numerous legislative and executive measures to advance and protect the rights of children and remained committed to upholding its commitments pursuant to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto. Qatar had sought to put in place early warning mechanisms to help ensure that any cases of child abuse or neglect were promptly brought to the attention of the authorities. To that end, Qatar had increased the number of social workers assigned to schools, who were trained to identify suspected cases of child abuse or neglect, and had held awareness-raising campaigns in schools to teach students how they could protect themselves from violence. Qatar had also established a 24-hour telephone hotline for reporting any suspected cases of child mistreatment, provided all children subjected to abuse or mistreatment with appropriate health-care and rehabilitation services, and sought to ensure that all child victims of violence or abuse were placed in secure and safe home environments. The Government was also working with relevant civil society organizations to combat bullying in schools.

63. Qatar was convinced that education was the key to development and was working with its international partners to ensure that all children, including those in emergency situations, enjoyed their right to a high-quality education. Qatar had provided substantial support to the Education Above All initiative, which aimed to uphold children's right to education in crisis- and conflict-stricken regions, and had recently provided a grant of $70 million to UNICEF to facilitate its efforts to provide clean drinking water in Yemen and combat the spread of cholera and other water-borne diseases, which could save the lives of millions of children.

64. **Mr. Charters** (Observer for the Holy See) said that his delegation attributed particular significance to the recognition in the Convention of the irreplaceable role of the family in fostering the growth and well-being of its members. The family was the first and vital cell of society because of its service to life, its unique role in the education of its members and its part in developing a sound social fabric. Parents had the primary responsibility to protect and nurture children in all phases of their growth. The well-being of children therefore depended on State measures to support families in fulfilling their life-giving and formative functions. At the same time, States should play a subsidiary role because integral human development and the exercise of human dignity could not be imposed; they must be allowed to unfold for each individual in communion with others.

65. The report of the Secretary-General on the status of the Convention (A/73/272) showed that child mortality remained unacceptably high, with 5.6 million children dying in 2016, mostly of preventable causes. Women and children should therefore be more adequately supported through the provision of quality maternal and child healthcare and integrated family-based services. States also had a duty to promote a culture that allowed children to exercise the right to education and discover their role and responsibilities within their family and community. That was not possible without the recognition of the inalienable right of parents to educate their children according to their religious and cultural values, especially in areas where the dignity of the person was at stake. No effort must be spared to create a culture that protected the young and vulnerable. Migrant children in particular should not be forgotten, as they were often voiceless, deprived of documentation and vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

66. **Mr. Zulu** (Zambia) said that his Government had recently adopted a revised Constitution, which provided for the comprehensive protection of children. It had also adopted a national policy on children, which aimed to reduce child malnutrition and expand early childhood care programmes throughout the country. A bill integrating the provisions of the Convention and of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child had been drafted and measures had been taken to strengthen the child protection system in the country,

including through family support services. Efforts to improve education included the construction and renovation of education facilities, the provision of materials and equipment, and the recruitment of teachers. Addressing gender-based violence in schools was a major priority, as unsafe school environments discouraged enrolment and led to increased rates of school dropout.

67. Noting that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognized the importance of ending harmful practices against children, including child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation, he said that the Government was in the process of standardizing the legal age of marriage and had begun a countrywide consultative process with a view to criminalizing child marriage in Zambia in order to ensure that any laws prohibiting the practice would actually be respected by the affected communities. The Government was also in the process of implementing the national strategy on ending child marriage, which aimed to reduce the number of child marriages by 40 per cent by 2021. In that regard, it continued to work with traditional leaders in order to educate them about the harmful effects of child marriage and teenage pregnancies. Continued investments in the health sector had yielded progress in the treatment and prevention of HIV and AIDS. The Government had provided treatment for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission to 89 per cent of affected mothers.

68. **Ms. Feldman** (Australia) said that the best interests of the child were a primary consideration in Australia's policy, administrative and legal decisions, and institutions. Legislation and case law in all jurisdictions concerning child protection, criminal justice, family law and health recognized its importance. The Government's policy objectives included closing the education gap between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians; improving access to education for children with disabilities; and preventing cervical cancer through free and voluntary human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccination for both girls and boys. The Government was also committed to empowering women, protecting girls from forced marriage and female genital mutilation, and stopping human trafficking in Australia and abroad.

69. Measures to protect children from abuse, harassment and bullying included the implementation of national policies to guide the development of safety and well-being practices in schools. The Government worked with state and territorial authorities to prevent child abuse and neglect and improve outcomes for children in out-of-home care systems. There was also a commissioner on children working within the Australian Human Rights Commission. In 2017, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse released its final report. The Government had already undertaken a number of actions to ensure children in institutional care were safe. They included reforming screening and oversight mechanisms for people working in the sector, developing child safety standards and establishing the national office for child safety. In 2010, Australia had launched a national redress scheme which was developed between all levels of government and non-governmental organizations to help victims of institutional child sexual abuse gain access to counselling, psychological care services, and monetary payments.

70. **Ms. Huilan Zhu** (China) said that the international community should uphold the principles of peaceful settlement of international disputes and create stable international and regional environments in order to protect children from war and turmoil. Her Government called on Member States to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and eliminate child poverty by promoting the economic development of developing countries, improving health-care services for children and respecting every child's right to education.

71. The advent of the Internet had facilitated the dissemination of information, enabling vulnerable children, such as girls and children with disabilities, to acquire knowledge and understand the world. On the other hand, Internet addiction, harmful information online and the proliferation of child pornography had resulted in both physical and psychological harm done to children. Sovereign States therefore had both the right and the responsibility to increase monitoring of the Internet and effectively prevent and combat the abuse of technology and the violation of children's rights.

72. China was home to one fifth of the world's children and the Government had long been committed to the promotion and protection of their rights. China was a State party to the Convention and its first two Optional Protocols, the ILO Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and the Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption. The Government attached great importance to strengthening monitoring of the Internet and had taken legislative and enforcement measures to fight cybercrimes to protect children from harmful online content.

73. **Ms. Ellertsdottir** (Iceland) said that her Government was concerned about the growing number of children living in regions where political violence and

armed conflict were a common occurrence. During its tenure on the Human Rights Council, Iceland had pledged to continue to support initiatives aimed at eliminating all forms of violence against children, in particular efforts aimed at eliminating sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage. Addressing those practices required comprehensive strategies to empower girls; work with boys and men, families, and community leaders to change social norms; improved access to quality education and health services; and the implementation legal and policy frameworks. Iceland would continue to support UNICEF and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) programmes to accelerate actions to end child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

74. Perpetrators of crimes involving abuse and violence against children must always be held accountable without regard to their position or social status. Given the devastating consequences of traumatic experiences on the mental and physical health of children, preventing such events or mitigating their effects required early detection and appropriate interventions using evidence-based procedures aimed at enhancing protective measures. Iceland therefore promoted multi-agency and child-friendly approaches to child protective services. In Iceland, the Children's House brought together child protection services, medical professionals, law enforcement, prosecutors and judges to investigate cases of suspected sexual abuse and other violence against children. Since its establishment in [illegible], the Children's House had inspired a similar approach in nearly 20 countries in Europe and had made the justice system in Iceland more accessible and effective for children. The Government placed great emphasis on the role played by the education system in empowering and preparing young people for participation in society. Free and universal education was crucial to social equality, economic growth and long-term prosperity. In that regard, Sustainable Development Goal 4, Target 1, called for all girls and boys to have access to inclusive and equitable quality education by 2030.

75. **Mr. Gertze** (Namibia) said that Namibia's national law on child care and protection was in line with international and regional agreements and set out mandates to prevent and respond to the neglect, abuse, exploitation and trafficking of children. Children across the economic spectrum in Namibia faced a number of challenges, including bullying, the effects of which were particularly harsh on marginalized groups, such as children living with HIV and AIDS, and children with disabilities. The report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children (A/73/276) recognized Namibia's efforts to enact legislation to protect children from violence.

76. A national framework that provided guiding principles for building safe and supportive school communities, centred on the well-being of students and educators, had been launched in September 2018. Namibia had also introduced free primary and secondary education to empower the girl child and ultimately put an end to the cycle of female poverty in the country. Although the education sector had a robust legislative framework and received the largest share of the national budget, it still faced a shortage of well-trained teachers; limited teaching and learning materials and playground equipment; overcrowded classrooms; and limited access to sanitation services, electricity, and technology, including Internet connections. In the area of health, teenage pregnancy was prevalent, while one in five new HIV infections occurred among adolescents, with girls accounting for two-thirds of those infections. In that regard, in addition to HIV prevention programmes, the Government had created formal support systems, including teen clubs, to provide a safe place for children living with HIV and AIDS to cope with the social and medical dimensions of their condition.

77. **Ms. Bang** Cho Eu (Republic of Korea) said that the promotion and protection of children's rights must include access to inclusive and equitable education as a top priority. In that regard, global citizenship education aimed to nurture citizens that would act upon the core values of understanding and respect for diversity, tolerance and human rights. As a staunch advocate of global citizenship education, the Republic of Korea, together with Qatar, had launched the Group of Friends for Global Citizenship Education in 2017. The Korean Government also supported the UNICEF "Generation Unlimited" initiative, which aimed to ensure that every young person would be engaged in education, learning, training or employment by 2030, and would improve education opportunities for children.

78. Long-awaited gender equality could only be achieved through the empowerment of girls, who were more susceptible to violence and discrimination and had lower school attendance rates. Particular focus should also be given to children with disabilities to ensure their full access to necessary social and educational services. The Republic of Korea eagerly supported global efforts to enhance the rights of children in a more inclusive manner. As a member of the Group of Friends on Children and the Sustainable Development Goals and the Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict,

the Korean Government had been a reliable partner in promoting and protecting the rights of the children.

79. **Mr.** Tun Lin **Swai** (Myanmar) said that his Government had placed the comprehensive development of children at the core of its national development agenda, which also supported the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Constitution of Myanmar guaranteed access to free and compulsory primary school education. In recent years, the Government had increased public spending on education and had subsidized the enrolment of secondary school students, resulting in a reduction in the school drop-out rate.

80. The Government had made peace and national reconciliation the highest priority in the national agenda. At the third session of the 21st-Century Panglong Conference, held in July 2018, an important agreement was reached by all parties to set up programmes to guarantee children's rights, abide by the Convention and eliminate the six grave violations against children as part of a commitment to mainstream child protection and prevention of violations into the peace process.

81. Since Myanmar had signed the Joint Action Plan with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict in June 2012, it had made significant progress to prevent and eliminate violations and abuses against children. More than 900 former underaged recruits had been released and reintegrated into communities and legal actions had been taken against those responsible for child recruitments. Significantly, there had been no reports of new child recruitments in 2018. The Government was working closely with the Office of the Special Representative for early completion of the Joint Action Plan.

82. Myanmar had ratified the Optional Protocol on the involvement on children in armed conflict and the ILO Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and was in the process of ratifying the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. After becoming a party to the Convention, Myanmar had enacted the national law on children in 1993. The Parliament was in the final stage of adopting a revision of that law which was in conformity with prevailing international norms and included provisions on the prevention of all forms of violence against children. Myanmar had signed the Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups in February 2017 and had signed a memorandum of understanding with the ILO in September 2018 to implement a national 2018-2021 decent work programme, which included the development and implementation of an action plan on child labour.

83. **Mr. Markar** (Sri Lanka), speaking as a youth delegate, said that children comprised approximately 30 per cent of his country's population. Sri Lanka was one of the early signatories to the Convention its Optional Protocols and the two ILO Convention on child labour and the Government took those obligations seriously. The Constitution guaranteed equality to all citizens and included special provisions for the advancement of children, women and disabled persons, recognizing the need for affirmative action on behalf of vulnerable communities. Children in Sri Lanka were protected by a network that began with the family and included a widespread, accessible health care system and a free education system from the primary to the university level. The Government also offered students free health care, meals, textbooks, uniforms and books.

84. He emphasized the importance of providing children with opportunities to exercise the freedom of expression and access appropriate information. Access to leisure and recreation was often denied in modern families where there was an overemphasis on academic performance. Children should be encouraged to participate in the decision-making processes that affected their lives with accurate information and care. The impact of new and evolving issues, such as the spread of fake news, hate speech and misinformation across social media, on the day-to-day lives of children should be considered.

85. **Ms Abdelkawy** (Egypt) said that her Government believed strongly that the family was the primary protector of children, as a family environment with a mother and father was needed to produce a physically and psychologically healthy child. Governments must therefore provide assistance to families and must ensure that the education of the child was directed to the development of respect for the child's parents, as well as the child's own cultural identity, language and values, as indeed was called for in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Her Government also believed that, to promote children's welfare, it was essential to develop their talents and mental and physical capacities.

86. Egypt had launched a national strategy to combat child and early marriages, which were key drivers of poverty among Egyptian families and accounted for up to 15 per cent of marriages in towns and cities and as many as 30 per cent of marriages in rural areas. Egypt had also witnessed a significant upsurge in bullying among children, which the Ministry of Education

believed had been driven, at least in part, by globalization and changes to social mores. In response, the Ministry had recently launched a major public awareness-raising campaign in cooperation with UNICEF to combat bullying both within and outside schools. Egypt was also working with UNICEF and the European Union to draw up a strategic framework on violence against children that would place particular emphasis on combating domestic violence, creating safe and nurturing school environments and raising awareness of the dangers posed by social media platforms and the Internet.

87. The President of Egypt had declared 2019 as the National Year of Education. In preparation, the Government was formulating a new comprehensive strategy on primary and secondary education that would focus, inter alia, on improving early childhood education, enhancing teacher training, and adopting innovative evaluation and follow up mechanisms with a view to strengthening education outcomes. She underscored her country's firm determination to uphold the Convention of the Rights of the Child and all other international instruments on the rights of children to which it was a party in line with its strong cultural and religious values.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

United Nations A/C.3/73/SR.14

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Summary record of the 14th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 10 October 2018, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Saikal ..... (Afghanistan)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Organizational matters

1. **The Chair** said that the Committee would proceed to vote on the proposal to seek a legal opinion from the United Nations Legal Counsel, which read "What are the legal bases for the inclusion of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi on the list of the Third Committee of the General Assembly of special mandate holders mandated to present a report to the Assembly at its seventy-third session; and the legal basis for the dialogue of the aforementioned Commission with the Committee in view of paragraph 22 of Human Rights Council resolution 39/14 of 28 September 2018?"

Statements made in explanation of vote before the voting

2. **Mr. Hilale** (Morocco), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that although the Charter and the rules of procedure of the General Assembly were clear on the need for respect of the sovereignty of Member States, some States had attempted to encroach on that sovereignty during the 10th meeting of the Committee. Consequently, the African Group wished to underscore three fundamental points. First, every delegation had the right to seek a legal opinion from the Office of Legal Affairs without a vote, as such votes were likely to be politicized and lead to polarization within the Committee. Second, as there had never been a case where a request for a legal opinion had been put to a vote, the African Group was concerned that the decision to proceed with a vote violated the rules of procedure and could set a precedent that would undermine State sovereignty and the credibility of the Committee. Third, the African Group urged the Chair to heed the wisdom of Member States and look to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the rules of procedure for guidance.

3. **Ms. Korac** (United States of America) said that her delegation would vote against the proposal as a request for a legal opinion must be made by an intergovernmental body; it could not be made by an individual Member State.

4. **Mr. Castillo Santana** (Cuba) said that it was his understanding that the decision to submit the question of the delegation of Burundi to the Office of Legal Affairs had already been taken, on 2 October 2018, and that only one delegation had been opposed to that course of action. It was truly regrettable that the principle of good faith, which should underlie the Committee's work, should be obstructed by a single position aimed at blocking the legitimate right of a State to seek clarification on any issue. For that reason, his delegation would vote in favour of the proposal to seek a legal opinion.

5. *A recorded vote was taken on the proposal by Burundi to seek a legal opinion from the United Nations Legal Counsel.*

In favour:

Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, China, Congo, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

United States of America.

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cote D'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, San Marino, Senegal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, United Kingdom, Uruguay.

6. *The proposal to seek a legal opinion from the United Nations Legal Counsel was adopted by 91 votes to one, with 66 abstentions.*

7. **Mr. Aldahhak** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation had voted in favour of the proposal because States that championed the rule of law should not be afraid to request a legal opinion.

8. **Mr. Poveda Brito** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his delegation had voted in favour of the proposal on the basis that a Member State had a legitimate right to request a legal opinion from the Office of Legal Affairs. The matter could be handled through consensus, as in the past, in the spirit of good faith that had always guided the Committee.

9. **The Chair** said that the Committee would thus resume its consideration of the pending invitations of special mandate holders as soon as it received the requested legal opinion.

Agenda item 70: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (A/73/257, A/73/41, A/73/265, A/73/272, A/73/278, A/73/276, A/73/174, A/73/174/Corr.1) (*continued*)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (A/73/223) (*continued*)

10. **Mr. Locsin** (Philippines) said that children were the most vulnerable members of society. Because they were guileless, unable to tell friend from foe, and utterly defenceless, the State must step in to ensure their survival and well-being. In fact, children were the most compelling justification for the very existence of States. The Government took its role of protector of children seriously. The constitution of the Philippines defended the rights of children to assistance, proper care and nutrition and protection from all forms of neglect and exploitation. Children had the right to free and compulsory primary education, and, recently, that right had been extended to tertiary education in public institutions.

11. Children in the Philippines were protected from any form of threat, assault or torture, and pending legislation would protect them from corporal punishment. As children did not belong on the battlefield in any capacity, an armed forces circular on child protection in armed conflicts contained strict procedures for responding to violations by State and non-State actors. After Philippine troops retook the city of Marawi, children that had been separated from their families had been reunited with them.

12. The Philippines valued participation and inclusion, and thus children were represented at various levels of governance. In the previous 10 years, the Philippines had passed 30 child-focused laws and had worked to create a nurturing environment that allowed children to enjoy their lives.

13. **Ms. Wadibiya-Anyanwu** (Nigeria) said that the National Child Rights Implementation Committee had been created in order to ensure the full realization of the Child Rights Act, which in turn had been enacted in 2003 to fully incorporate the Convention on the Rights of the Child into national law. In further demonstration of the commitment of the Government to all human rights, a national task force was responsible for providing protection of and support for children against abuse, molestation and victimization in public and private places.

14. The Government was mainstreaming children into national politics through its creation of the Nigerian Children's Parliament, which had been replicated in all 36 states of the Federation as well as the Federal Capital Territory. It had also developed a national priority agenda for a multisectoral approach to ensuring that all social sector programmes were sensitive to the welfare of the most vulnerable children and their families. Other initiatives included the formulation of national policy on child labour, to be followed by the creation of child labour units; the implementation of a national information management system to ensure unified national reporting on programming for orphans and vulnerable children; and the digitization of the national birth registration agency. The Government was also carrying out a series of initiatives to improve school safety and safeguard against attacks, provide education in emergency situations, enhance girl child education and increase their enrolment rates, and end child marriage. The Cyber Crime Act addressed the challenge of cyber manipulation as a tool for violence, bullying, trafficking, sexual exploitation and recruitment to extremist groups.

15. Her delegation called on the international community to ensure the legal protection of children from sexual abuse, exploitation and other evils.

16. **Mr. Mohamed** (Sudan) said that his country had established frameworks to strengthen children's rights, including a 2010 law protecting children from all forms of violence, inhumane treatment, neglect, exploitation and all forms of sexual abuse. In accordance with that law, the Sudan had adopted an integrated legal framework to deal with minors, which included the appointment of a special prosecutor for crimes against them. To strengthen the prohibition on violations of

children's rights, the Government had appointed a public prosecutor for crimes in Darfur that would investigate relevant cases from that region. A 24-hour hotline had been set up to provide immediate assistance to child victims of violence.

17. The Government of the Sudan complied with all international and regional instruments on the rights of migrants and refugees. Trafficking in persons was prohibited by a 2014 law and the Children's Act, and the country had signed bilateral agreements with various neighbouring States to combat it. It had also offered training to police officers and prosecutors on how to deal with matters pertaining to trafficking in persons and had provided safe houses for victims.

18. The Sudan had signed a joint action plan with the United Nations on the protection of children in armed conflict, which had resulted in the removal of the Sudan from the list of parties that recruited and used child soldiers. The Sudan wished to extend thanks to the UNICEF office in Khartoum for providing former child soldiers with shelter and psychological support.

19. **Mr. Bin Momen** (Bangladesh) said that his Government believed that children's rights could best be protected by guaranteeing education and health care, and it had worked tirelessly to deliver those services, even to remote areas. Since early 2018, the Government had provided over 350 million free textbooks to students at primary and secondary schools and stipends for millions of students were sent directly to their mothers through mobile telephones. Dropout rates had decreased. The country had also sent buses equipped with computers across the country to provide training in information and communication technology. Programmes had been developed for students with disabilities and books in braille had been distributed to the visually impaired.

20. The Government was particularly committed to the welfare of women and girls. In 2017, Bangladesh had updated its Child Marriage Restraint Act and had developed a national plan of action to end child marriage. Those measures had gradually reduced child marriage. Bangladesh had also developed action plans to provide children and adolescents access to information about sexual and reproductive health rights and services.

21. The Government of Bangladesh welcomed the discussion of the grave violations perpetrated by Myanmar authorities against Rohingya children, who formed a significant portion of the 720,000 forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals. Existing services such as victim support centres and toll-free helplines were currently being extended to Rohingya women and children in the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar.

22. **Mr. Rumongi** (Rwanda) said that recent data from the United Nations monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict showed an increase in verified cases of the six grave violations. Rwanda commended the achievements of the Special Representative and relevant United Nations agencies in alleviating children's suffering.

23. Rwanda had prioritized children's participation in national policies and programmes. To that end, the Government had established an annual Children's Summit, which provided an opportunity for children to discuss issues affecting their lives and ensure that their concerns were considered in national policies, and children's forums had been established at the village and district levels. The Government was implementing a national strategy for child care that would transform the current child care and protection system into a supportive, family-based system, thereby shifting the emphasis from institutional care. Rwanda was also working to ensure an inclusive, equitable and safe education system.

24. Rwanda had developed decentralized structures to ensure the protection of children, including child protection units at law enforcement agencies. It had also launched projects to raise awareness of child abuse and ensure that offenders were identified and dealt with through the appropriate legal channels.

25. **Ms. Abbey** (Ghana) said that although greater attention paid to the issue of child marriage had yielded a significant decrease in its prevalence around the world over the previous decade, it remained a major concern, particularly on the African continent. The most recent effort by the African Union to address the problem had been the African Girls' Summit on Ending Child Marriage in Africa, held in Kigali in 2018, where 22 countries had signed on to the campaign and committed to accelerating efforts at the national level. One in three girls in the developing world was married by the age of 18, and the factors that drove and underpinned that practice, such as gender inequality, poverty, social exclusion, marginalization and insecurity, should be addressed with legislative measures, safety nets and poverty reduction strategies, especially in rural areas.

26. The President, in his role as a *HeForShe* Champion, had pledged to increase efforts to reduce and end child marriage, and the Ministry of Gender and Social Protection had established a unit dedicated to that purpose. Engagement with all stakeholders was critical

in such initiatives. The Government had also introduced a free senior high school policy, which enabled more girls to enrol who, owing to poverty, might otherwise have been married off and unable to complete their education.

27. The recruitment and abduction of children for armed conflict and their exploitation and abuse was a matter of serious concern. States should do more to challenge those responsible for such violations of international law, and her delegation urged further measures to protect children and civilians in armed conflict situations. All Member States should recommit themselves to the purposes of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and should endorse the Paris Commitments to protect children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or armed groups and the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups. The United Nations must not fail in its important task of promoting and protecting children.

28. **Mr. Bermúdez Álvarez** (Uruguay) said that Uruguay had long been a regional and global leader in the promotion and protection of children's rights. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols constituted the normative framework for protecting children and ensuring their well-being, and crucially, recognized that children were human beings with a set of rights instead of passive objects requiring protection. His delegation called for the Convention and its Optional Protocols to be universally ratified and fully implemented. All reservations to those instruments should also be withdrawn.

29. Children were one of the most vulnerable groups in society and must be protected by public policy. In Uruguay, a code on childhood and adolescence had been adopted by Parliament in 2004, which established that all children and adolescents enjoyed human rights and they must be exercised in accordance with their stage of development. A national plan for early childhood, childhood and adolescence for 2016–2020 had also been drafted. Children's rights must be recognized and safeguarded in all State activities, including in legislation and the formulation of public policy. His country had been working hard along those lines, taking into consideration the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

30. Child poverty was an insult to the human condition. Uruguay had implemented targeted anti-poverty policies, in accordance with the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals. His country was especially concerned by the sexual exploitation of children, child prostitution and child pornography and condemned in the strongest terms all violence, exploitation and abuse of children. Violence against children could never be justified and must be prevented and eradicated. The situation of children living in areas of armed conflict was also of particular concern, as well as their recruitment by States and armed groups.

31. **Ms. Bellout** (Algeria) said that her Government had increased its education budget tenfold during the previous 15 years, with free education offered to all children living on Algerian territory, regardless of nationality or status, including to children in refugee camps in Tindouf. Significant achievements had been made in improving the efficiency of the Algerian education system and enabling all children to receive primary education.

32. International human rights law and international humanitarian law had placed special emphasis on protecting children's rights. Algeria was a State party to many international instruments and, in accordance with its international obligations as well as Sustainable Development Goal 16.2, it had passed laws criminalizing violence against children. The Government had also recently enacted a child protection law containing provisions on the protection of at-risk children, on child offenders and on child protection within specialized centres.

33. **Mr. Beleffi** (San Marino) said that his country and had been striving to integrate the general principles of the Convention and its optional protocols into its legal framework and in its policies and programmes. San Marino supported the Paris Commitments and had also been among the first to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

34. The 2030 Agenda emphasized respect for human rights and dignity and required specific measures to support the vulnerable. Accordingly, children and young people must be supported so that they grew up free of all forms of abuse and exploitation. Unfortunately, children in areas of armed conflict were killed, kidnapped, raped, used as human shields and recruited as soldiers. Their schools and hospitals were often destroyed, depriving them of their fundamental rights. In 2018, San Marino had added its name to the list of countries supporting the Safe Schools Declaration, an important tool for protecting educational facilities from military use during conflicts.

35. **Ms. Ershadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that her country was committed to promoting and protecting children's rights. Over the past 40 years, Iranians had been subjected to illegal, inhumane and genocidal

unilateral sanctions imposed by the United States, which flouted human rights and were indiscriminately targeting the most vulnerable, including children and those in need of vital medical attention.

36. Armed conflicts around the world were leaving mental and physical scars on children trapped in conflict zones. Yemen was the scene of a humanitarian catastrophe and violations of the human rights of children. Indiscriminate and intentional attacks had resulted in the mass killing and maiming of children, and their suffering had been exacerbated by severe famine and disease as the result of an inhumane blockade. The protection of Yemeni children must be given greater attention by the international community.

37. Children's rights had been incorporated into her country's sixth five-year development plan and its Charter of Citizenship Rights. The national development plan addressed aspects of physical and mental health, such as comprehensive vaccination and combating child labour, while the Charter recognized rights such as access to age-appropriate information and protection from harassment and violence.

38. Iranian girls and boys enjoyed equal access to education and, following intervention at the highest level of Government, all children living in Iran could be registered free of charge in schools, including undocumented refugees. On the subject of health, the gap between rural and urban children had been reduced by 50 per cent in three years.

39. Lastly, she wished to recall the pain suffered by the children who had ended up in cages and who had been forcibly separated from their parents and families because of short-sighted political interests. Her delegation regretted that the United Nations had been unable to properly respond to such a flagrant violation of their human rights.

40. **Mr. Aldahhak** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, prior to the current crisis, his country had made great strides towards sustainable development in the fields of education and health care and had curbed communicable diseases through its national immunization campaign. Since the onset of the crisis, however, State institutions had to work to preserve those achievements. In collaboration with friendly Governments and organizations authorized to operate in the country, Syria had managed to provide free education and health care for children and organize vaccination campaigns. With the help of UNICEF and the World Food Programme, children in areas that had been controlled by terrorist organizations were able to move to Government-controlled areas.

41. The Syrian delegation was surprised by the statements of certain delegations regarding their Governments' efforts to ensure respect for the rights of children internationally. The representative of one regional group, for example, had spoken of the need to leave no child behind and of policies to fight poverty. However, such statements were contradicted by the imposition of coercive unilateral measures on a number of countries, including Syria. They were also contradicted by the selectivity and politicization in dealing with human rights issues, the silence in the face of violations committed by influential countries and the aggression against Syria by the illegitimate international coalition.

42. Syria called for an end to all inhumane practices against Syrian and non-Syrian children in refugee camps. It also called for an end to the suffering of Syrian and Arab children living in the occupied Syrian Golan and other occupied Arab territory. It also warned of the suffering and diminished educational opportunities for children that would result from cuts to the budget of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

43. **Ms. Ahmed** (Bahrain) said that her country understood the importance of providing a secure environment for children in order to foster the full development of their capacities and talents. To that end, the Government of Bahrain had taken measures in the areas of health care, education and social and psychological protection for children. It had created a set of professional development workshops for public school and kindergarten teachers. It had also established counselling services for school children.

44. The country's National Childhood Strategy included measures to protect children from all forms of violence and abuse as well as initiatives to ensure respect for their physical and psychological safety. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development had set up a hotline to receive reports of child abuse or endangerment and to provide counselling and referrals to relevant agencies. The hotline also offered real-time consultations and legal advice to families. Bahrain had organized training workshops for children on issues of sexual harassment.

45. In order to spread awareness of the National Childhood Strategy, various media in Bahrain had adopted policies to instil the values and attitudes towards children promoted in the Convention. Bahraini television and radio had developed engaging and balanced programmes on matters related to children's rights. A programme featuring a family counsellor addressed topics such as violence against children, the

principles of child psychology and teaching children about sexual harassment.

46. **Mr. McElwain** (United States of America) said that the Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development supported international organizations, non-governmental institutions and others in the private sector in their work to prevent and reduce child, early and forced marriage. Those initiatives included, for instance, an annual educational residential retreat for youth scholars in the Gambia, and a project to address child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation in northern Kenya. Community dialogues were held in order to change norms and promote the value of girls and engage youth on human rights issues.

47. Education could help to fill the gap in economic or employment opportunities lost because of early or forced marriages. From 2011 to 2017, nearly 70 million children benefited from early grade reading instruction funded by the Agency, and 725,000 youth gained new or better employment after participating in Agency-funded workforce development programmes. Some 4.1 million children and youth in crisis or conflict countries who had previously been out of school had received access to education. Almost half of the beneficiaries of such programmes were female.

48. The Department of State was combating child, early and forced marriage by providing emergency assistance funds to victims and potential victims of such practices and was supporting related local organizations in the Middle East among Syrian and other refugees. The United States was committed to efforts to provide a brighter future for girls.

49. **Mr. Tiare** (Burkina Faso) said that his Government had made enormous efforts to meet its international obligations in the context of rapid demographic growth, weak socioeconomic expansion and security challenges. Burkina Faso now had a robust legal and institutional corpus on the promotion and protection of children's rights, following the adoption of laws and decrees in areas such as child labour; the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; and violence against women and girls. A national council for childhood had been established to monitor and evaluate the efforts made by Burkina Faso to protect children's rights.

50. His Government had adopted a national economic and social development plan in 2016, which made children's rights a priority and contained key objectives on improving quality of life for women and children through better health, education and social protection.

51. His Government had also undertaken to make 18 the legal age of marriage for both girls and boys. In collaboration with civil society, and with the active involvement of customary and religious leaders, the Government had also established multisectoral platforms and operational plans to foster an environment that protected adolescents who had been victims of or who were at risk of early marriage or female genital mutilation.

52. Despite the progress made, however, numerous challenges remained, including access to clean drinking water, hygiene and sanitation, the vulnerability of children in some regions owing to growing insecurity, and the persistence of harmful cultural practices. Burkina Faso hoped to be able to address those challenges with the support of its technical and financial partners and UNICEF. His Government appreciated the support it had received and would continue to work with the international community to promote and protect children's rights.

53. **Ms Chidiac** (Lebanon) said that adults still failed to understand that every child was special. Governments, societies, institutions and individuals owed it to children to protect them, promote them, help them reach their full potential and give them a voice.

54. Lebanon continued to place children at the heart of its development policies. The recent parliamentary elections would pave the way for new legislative and executive measures that would further cement the country's progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda. Nevertheless, considerable advances had been made in the past few years. Lebanon remained committed to the provision of free and mandatory education in public schools, health-care services and free vaccinations, social and judicial protection and protection from cybercrime, sexual harassment and violence. In order to ensure that children's voices were heard, the Government had developed a children's parliament project to educate children on parliamentary procedures and develop their leadership skills. The National Commission for Lebanese Women had prepared a study on protecting underage girls from early marriage and had drafted a law to regulate the practice. Children with disabilities were being given considerable attention in order to continue safeguarding their basic rights.

55. The main challenge currently facing Lebanon was the presence of over 1.2 million displaced Syrians, more than 417,000 of whom were aged between 3 and 14 years, which had placed health-care and school infrastructure under extreme pressure. In cooperation with United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, Lebanon had set up hundreds of schools

to teach refugee children. Basic health coverage was provided for all children through the national network of primary health centres.

56. **Mr. Tōnē** (Tonga) said that Tonga was firmly committed to implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child through national legislation and policies. As a small island developing State, Tonga faced considerable resource and financial constraints, which had led to delays in fulfilling its reporting obligations in a timely manner. However, the country had recently submitted its first report under article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and had made significant strides in the promotion and protection of children's rights through genuine and enduring partnerships, including with Australia, New Zealand, Sweden and UNICEF Pacific.

57. Greater online connectivity was providing more opportunities, but it had also given rise to security threats. With the support of its partners, Tonga had aligned its criminal legislation with the Convention on Cybercrime of the Council of Europe, strengthening the country's laws and policies to combat sexual exploitation and violence against children perpetrated through cyberspace and cybertechnologies, including bullying.

58. The Government continued to work to uphold the rights of children in the criminal justice system. In conjunction with its partners, the Government was actively building the system's capacity to handle juvenile cases and was establishing equal access to justice and legal protection for children who were survivors of domestic violence or vulnerable to it.

59. As a low-lying large ocean State, the human rights of everyone in the country, including children, were closely linked to protection of the marine and land environment. That nexus, in the light of climate change and rising sea levels, was a pressing concern that threatened the country's very existence. Tonga therefore welcomed the decision of the International Law Commission to include the topic "Sea-level rise in relation to international law" in its long-term programme of work.

60. **Ms. Abdalla** (United Arab Emirates) said that in 2016, her country had enacted a law to protect children from neglect, exploitation, physical and psychological violence and online abuse. In November 2018, the United Arab Emirates would host a global forum on protecting children from online abuse. The forum would be attended by prominent religious leaders who would aim to formulate common principles on how to keep young people safe from exploitation over the Internet. The event would coincide with World Children's Day and reinforce the importance of arriving at shared views and approaches. The United Arab Emirates had joined the Virtual Global Taskforce, an international working group composed of police forces and executive agencies from various countries which aimed to combat cybercrime against children. The country had also ratified the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.

61. In 2013, the United Arab Emirates had launched the Children's International Film Festival, whose aim was to screen international films and modern media content of particular interest to young viewers, to teach children about other cultures and reinforce the value of peaceful coexistence. In an effort to foster children's participation in electoral processes and provide them with a forum in which to share their views, the United Arab Emirates hosted the permanent headquarters of the Arab Children's Parliament. The Government had launched a national strategy for the 2017–2021 period to bolster the rights of children with disabilities.

62. **Ms. Niculae** (Romania) said that Romania had become one of the two European pathfinder countries in the Global Partnership to end Violence against Children in 2016, committing to identify and operationalize initiatives to end violence against children, deliver services to prevent and respond to violence, and support reforms in the country and beyond. Several awareness-raising campaigns had been run by the Government in conjunction with UNICEF Romania and non-governmental organizations to increase recognition of various forms of violence and more cases of violence against children were being reported as a result, thus giving authorities the opportunity to intervene. In January 2018, the Government had established a national ombudsman for children.

63. The Ministry of National Education was implementing national strategies on the promotion and protection of children's rights, the creation of a society without barriers for persons with disabilities, and child and adolescent mental health. It had also issued key documents on preventing and countering violence and juvenile delinquency and ensuring school safety. In conjunction with Save the Children Romania, the Ministry of National Education had published a guide on safe Internet use for pupils and had run anti-hate and anti-bullying campaigns. A national plan to prevent bullying was also under consideration. Children with special educational needs could be enrolled in both mainstream education and special schools and legislative and concrete measures had been taken to ensure their access to school and employment.

64. Combating and preventing school dropouts was another priority. The Government provided financial support for pupils unable to attend school in their home towns and second-chance programmes supported those who had not yet completed their compulsory education.

65. At the policy level, a new set of strategies had been developed for 2014–2020 to combat child poverty and ensure well-being, targeting areas such as health, the rights of persons with disabilities and Roma inclusion. Romania was also firmly committed to continuing the process of de-institutionalizing children in residential care by developing family-based alternatives and had made significant progress over the years. The National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights and Adoption was currently implementing a national project to provide each child in the protection system with an environment as close as possible to that offered by a family.

66. **Ms. Mohammed** (Ethiopia) said that one of her Government's greatest successes had been the integration of the promotion and protection of children's rights into its economic and social policy. Significant reforms had been undertaken to bring national laws into line with international instruments and a five-year action plan for children had been developed. Ethiopia was informing the public about children's rights and was also educating the children themselves; school clubs had made important contributions in tackling early marriage as well as harmful traditional practices. By 2016, the prevalence of female genital mutilation had been reduced to 23 per cent and that of child marriage to 8 per cent.

67. In collaboration with UNICEF and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Ethiopia had developed a standard operating procedure for tackling trafficking in children, which provided a framework for a coordinated and standardized response that included registration, family tracing, reunification and the reintegration of trafficked children.

68. The employment of children under the age of 14 was prohibited and bullying was being addressed through a code of conduct on the prevention of school-related gender-based violence, which had been developed in 2016 with technical and financial assistance from UNICEF. Despite the progress made by Ethiopia in various domains, however, much remained to be done in light of the enormity of the challenges the country faced.

69. **Ms. Banasen** (Cameroon) said that, despite the progress made in implementing the Plan of Action entitled "A world fit for children", their situation remained worrying in many parts of the world, but particularly in Africa. His Government was extremely concerned by the activities of terrorist groups such as Boko Haram, which used abduction as a modus operandi and forced children to participate in the hostilities. The Government had taken steps to halt the practice, including by promoting children's education and raising awareness among imams of the need to protect children from being used in armed conflicts.

70. Campaigns to raise awareness of children's rights in the family context had produced good results. Cameroon had also emphasized training staff to assist the victims of domestic violence and their families and had established mechanisms to raise awareness of and respond to cases of violence against children, especially in the Far North Region. The level of physical abuse in schools had decreased in real terms.

71. Education was central to realizing the fundamental rights of children and was provided free of charge in both rural and urban areas. Schooling was also provided for girls in the Far North Region, in pygmy camps and for the many refugees hosted by his country. The advent of a world fit for children would depend on taking a comprehensive approach to tackling poverty in all its forms, and the international community must support efforts made by States. Only such active solidarity could give the world "the future we want".

72. **Ms. Vives Balmaña** (Andorra) said that Andorra made annual contributions to the Trust Fund for Children and Armed Conflict. In addition, it had endorsed the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (Paris Principles) and the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers (Vancouver Principles) and the Safe Schools Declaration. The thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child should be marked by a renewed commitment to protect and promote children's rights.

73. Her Government had launched a plan of action to prevent bullying and give students tools for resolving conflict through dialogue. Teachers must be trained in preventing bullying, supporting the victims and correcting the bullies. To encourage participation from young people, a short film competition had been launched, and campaigns were planned to raise awareness of the problem.

74. During her visit to Andorra in June 2018, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children had called for investment in childhood. Andorra was applying that approach, particularly with regard to education and the social and family environment. Her country also collaborated with

UNICEF to promote children's rights nationally and to contribute to their well-being in other countries. The Government was finalizing a draft law on children and adolescents' rights, which covered both rights and responsibilities as well as measures for coordinating and planning policies on childhood. A national council would be established through which children and adolescents could participate and be represented, and a national registry would be set up to monitor and follow up on all cases of child abuse. The Government had also recently launched a campaign to combat sexual abuse in sport. Sometimes, the first step in addressing a problem was to heighten its visibility within society.

75. **Ms. Taradai** (Ukraine) said that the Government had recently adopted the national action plan for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child through 2021. The program updated the working methods of State authorities and local self-government bodies at all levels in order to secure the interests of children. The government had also taken legislative measures to combat bullying and establish responsibility for it. Furthermore, steps were being taken to improve legislation and ensure that children and other persons with special educational needs had access to free educational, psychological, pedagogical and correctional development in State and municipal educational institutions. The Government had introduced special programmes to enable children in the temporarily occupied territories of Crimea and Donbass to receive higher education in mainland Ukraine.

76. With regard to the more than 220,000 children in Donetsk and Luhansk regions living inside the 30-kilometer-wide buffer zone affected by Russian aggression, the Government strongly condemned the practice of shelling of schools by Russian-controlled illegal armed groups, which had been described in a recent report by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the human rights situation in Ukraine. In addition to such ceasefire violations, children along the contact line were heavily affected by landmines, explosive remnants of war and unexploded ordnance, which were the leading cause of child casualties.

77. The practical assistance provided by UNICEF in training psychologists working with children, students, teachers and other education personnel to address the problem of posttraumatic stress disorder was highly valued, as were mine-risk education campaigns providing life-saving information in conflict-affected areas.

78. Ukraine was committed to promoting and protecting the rights of children, creating favourable conditions for their lives and development, ensuring equal opportunities for them and protecting them from violence. It would remain a reliable partner and support the efforts of the international community to achieve those aims.

79. **Mr. Melad** (Libya) said that his country was fully committed to implementing all international human rights instruments to which it was a party, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto. Libya had adopted laws to safeguard the rights of all male and female children in the country, including the rights to free education, shelter, clean drinking water, food and freedom from all forms of violence. Libyan law also ensured that children with disabilities and children living in difficult circumstances as a result of the crisis affecting the country enjoyed the same rights as all other children.

80. Law No. 10 of 1984 regulating marriage and divorce prohibited early marriage and provided that both men and women must be at least 20 years old in order to marry. Libya had raised the age of majority from 16 to 18 years of age and had amended the law on juvenile justice to bring it into line with relevant international instruments. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education was working closely with other ministries and with the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund and the International Organization for Migration to assess the country's educational needs and develop and implement a strategy for improving Libya's education system. Libya was also seeking to promote positive, non-violent forms of discipline as an alternative to corporal punishment and was taking steps to foster a culture of peace and non-violence among children with a view to combating bullying in schools.

81. The promotion and protection of the rights of children could not be achieved in the absence of peace and security. Children and adolescents were disproportionately affected by poverty and unemployment and at particular risk of being recruited by groups espousing extremist ideologies. It was therefore crucial to resolve armed conflicts, combat terrorist and extremist groups, promote a culture of non-violence, and uphold international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. The international community must redouble its efforts to ensure that all children grew and prospered in safe and nurturing environments. Mechanisms must also be developed to facilitate the repatriation of minors from abroad, including children who had been forcibly recruited by terrorist and extremist groups, and promote their reintegration into their societies.

82. **Ms. Cordova Soria** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that, while there had been setbacks in the collective path towards building more just societies, such as the migration crisis and the weakening of multilateralism, there had also been some notable advances, as in the case of child protection.

83. In Bolivia, new development and poverty reduction programmes had been implemented to promote greater economic and social equality, which placed a special emphasis on children and families. In 2014, a new code on childhood and adolescence had been adopted, which was based on the international instruments ratified by the Bolivian State and on an analysis of the challenges faced by children and adolescents in the context of Bolivian culture and ancestral values. A law on youth had also been in force since 2013, which recognized the full and active participation of young people through their organizations and gave priority to programmes that enabled young people to gain access to their rights. A programme had also been implemented since 2009 that provided technical training to young people with few economic resources and helped them find work.

84. The infant mortality rate had dropped considerably and Bolivia was working to reduce it further. The Government had implemented an economic incentive called Bono Juana Azurduy, which required pregnant women to attend four prenatal appointments, give birth in a hospital and attend a postpartum check-up, and attend regular appointments to monitor the child's growth and development until their second birthday. A far higher number of children were now being born in hospital and malnutrition among under-fives in Bolivia had fallen. Bono Juancito Pinto, a similar programme, aimed to increase school enrolment and decrease the dropout rate, thus reducing the inter-generational transmission of poverty.

85. **Mr. Gimolieca** (Angola) said that issues concerning children had always been a priority of the Government, which had worked hard to promote their rights domestically in accordance with national commitments, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, as well as other regional and international agreements. Recently the Government had approved a national development plan for 2018–2022 that included concrete programmes to prevent child institutionalization, promote employment and income generation, support childcare institutions, and promote the health and education sectors. A new law on the integral development of the child and the sound social protection that required had also been passed.

86. Despite the complexities of the situation of child poverty, which posed an obstacle to the protection of children's rights, the Government noted improved access to birth registration, maternal and child health programmes, education and other areas, as well as a considerable reduction in child mortality rates. The Government also was determined to prohibit the harmful practices of early and forced marriage, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Convention, and was working to eliminate from law the few remaining exceptions under which marriage could take place before the age of 18.

87. With regard to the human rights challenge of violence against children, the Government condemned traditional practices that harmed human dignity, and had recently adopted national policies and laws to prohibit all types of violence and support child victims and vulnerable segments of society. A national strategy for the inclusion of children with disabilities had also been implemented to address stigma and discrimination against them.

88. **Mr. Gumende** (Mozambique) said that gender issues, the rights of children and persons with disabilities, and the protection of older persons were integrated in national development plans. Children were recognized as people at an early stage of development, and they were the pillars of the country's sustainable development as they grew into adults. The Constitution established the legal framework to ensure the promotion and protection of children's rights in accordance with the Convention, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and other international treaties signed by Mozambique. Several existing domestic laws also codified the protection of children in various aspects. Children living in poverty, in particular, were a group defined by such laws as a priority for Government intervention.

89. Many stakeholders were involved in the promotion and protection of children's rights, including public and private institutions, civil society organizations and United Nations agencies, and children even had their own parliament where they exercised their legislative rights and discussed issues of concern in an open and frank manner. However, the Government was also conscious of the challenges ahead, such as poverty, limited access to education, health services, water and sanitation for all children, which prevented the full enjoyment of their rights. Those challenges played a prominent role in Government development plans.

90. **Mr. Sipaco Ribala** (Equatorial Guinea) said that his country remained concerned by the remaining challenges and by the violations of children's rights,

especially during armed conflict. Equatorial Guinea had improved its child protection system by modernizing its legislative bases and incorporating policies on gender equality and child protection. To ensure justice for minors, the Government had adopted Decree 50/2017, which extended family and guardianship courts to all provincial capitals. To strengthen institutional capacity on the basis of best practice, the Government had participated in a high-level meeting on ending child marriage and a workshop on measuring disability in children.

91. The number of children attending preschool and primary school in Equatorial Guinea had risen steadily and gender parity had been achieved. A committee had been established to support the protection and promotion of children's rights, through which an educational centre for the most vulnerable children had been set up.

92. Equatorial Guinea would continue to work closely with UNICEF and other United Nations agencies, development partners and civil society organizations to promote and protect children's rights. Member States should ensure child protection capacity and continue to provide opportunities to advocate for better child protection, including in situations of armed conflict, and to promote the participation of and consultation with children and adolescents, especially girls, through education, the development of leadership skills and the provision of safe spaces and support networks, all of which enabled them to become agents of change in their communities.

93. **Mr. Hermida Castillo** (Nicaragua) said that the family was the natural and fundamental core unit to ensure the growth, development and well-being of children and adolescents. Parents and guardians, in conjunction with the State, bore the primary responsibility for educating, training and guiding children and adolescents in exercising their rights in accordance with their stage of development. For that reason, the Government focused on developing programmes that benefited Nicaraguan families.

94. His Government's commitment to upholding children's rights was reflected in statistics such as the considerable reduction in the under-five mortality rate and the decrease in extreme poverty. In addition, the Ministry of Education had made huge efforts to narrow the digital divide and one in three children under 18 years of age was now connected to the Internet.

95. With the support of UNICEF, the Ministry of Family, Adolescence and Childhood had implemented a strategy from 2007 to 2017 to return children living in protection centres to their families. By 2017, the number of such centres had been reduced from 92 to 25, through dialogue with the religious groups and other organizations that were running the centres.

96. **Ms. Ferry** (Monaco) said that the Principality was a sponsor of Security Council resolutions concerning the plight of children in situations of armed conflict, had participated in awareness-raising and reintegration initiatives, and had endorsed a declaration on the security of schools, which were often used for war-related purposes in times of conflict, thereby endangering students.

97. Education was a fundamental right and was vital to the economic, social and cultural development of all societies. In 2017 a non-governmental organization, with the financial support of the Government, had distributed birth certificates to children who did not have them, with the aim of ensuring that they could successfully register at school, participate in official examinations and become active citizens.

98. Demonstrating its engagement in the area of promotion and protection of the rights of the child, Monaco had convened a high-level symposium on the topic of violence against children in the context of the family or the school, which had been attended by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children. Over the previous decade, the Government had also organized workshops and conferences for students to learn about the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS. The international community should make every effort to create a world fit for children, who were agents of change and the leaders of tomorrow.

99. **Ms. Bah-Chang** (Sierra Leone) said that no child should be denied their fundamental rights as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Optional Protocols thereto and all relevant international human rights instruments. As part of its national response, the Government had restructured or reorganized several institutions in order to more effectively monitor and coordinate children's rights issues. There was a national committee on gender-based violence, a national referral protocol for child victims of sexual and gender-based violence, and projects to build homes for victims of domestic violence in the northern and western parts of the country. A new policy on child welfare and alternative care and a strategy on teenage pregnancy and child marriage would be launched in the current month.

100. Legislative protection existed in the form of the Child Rights Act, and the Government was committed to implementing several other measures in the future. Those included increasing the budget for

implementation of relevant laws, increasing the capacity to investigate and prosecute reported cases, improving protection, rehabilitation and reintegration for victims of sexual abuse, launching a national programme for adolescents on sexual and reproductive health, improving opportunities for pregnant girls and teenage mothers to receive education, harmonizing and standardizing laws to combat child marriage, and reviewing and enforcing laws on adoption, child trafficking, child labour and juvenile justice.

101. A policy of free, quality education had been introduced in order to reduce marginalization and increase access by every child, from primary through secondary school level, to education at all Government and Government-assisted schools. In the context of efforts to achieve Goal 4, educational facilities should be child-friendly, sensitive to gender and disability, and provide a safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environment. Despite challenges and constraints in building capacity and implementing existing laws and policies, much progress had indeed been made. Every child deserved a fair chance in life, and every country should promote the welfare of its children.

102. **Mr. Sisa** (Botswana) said that the Government and United Nations agencies had partnered to combat all forms of violence against women and girls, including trafficking and sexual exploitation and abuse of children, and eliminate harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage. One example of the fruit of that collaboration was a joint gender programme on gender-based violence for the period 2018–2020.

103. On the domestic front, the Parliament had passed a motion in December 2017 to establish a registry of sexual offenders that would be used to prevent such persons from working in institutions that served children. The age of sexual consent had also been raised from 16 to 18 years in the interest of promoting and protecting the rights of the child. It was expected that that legislative change would be effective in combating defilement and child abuse, abduction, indecent assault and kidnapping of children.

104. Through a partnership with UNICEF, the Chief Executive Officer Council for Child Rights had been established in 2017 with the aim of strengthening the role of the private sector in protecting and advocating children's rights, and especially preventing the sexual exploitation and abuse of children. His delegation expressed gratitude for the assistance provided by UNICEF.

105. Lastly, in 2017 Botswana had submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child its second, third and fourth periodic reports on the implementation of the Convention.

106. **Ms. Tshering** (Bhutan) said that the Government was committed to investing resources in programmes and projects that had a positive impact on the lives of children, youth, women and the vulnerable and disadvantaged. More than half of the population of Bhutan was under the age of 25 and the Government had prioritized the welfare of children and youth in national planning and budgeting. The national development strategy had been informed by the child multidimensional poverty index, which had been developed by Bhutan and was the first of its kind in the world. The approach adopted would be useful in addressing Goal 10 and was intended to end the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

107. The national plan of action for child protection was integrated in the current five-year plan and would empower child and enhance their participation in all parts of society. Child focal points had been appointed in all Government agencies and non-governmental organizations in order to ensure the mainstreaming of children's rights into sector policies and plans. The Bhutan Children's Parliament had also been established in 2015 to fully engage children in the electoral process and encourage their participation in democracy and policy decisions. UNICEF had been a valued partner in such endeavours, and children would remain at the centre of his country's efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda.

108. **Mr. Guilavogui** (Guinea) said that several measures had been implemented for the promotion of the rights and welfare of the child. Ten aspirations elaborated by African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in the context of Africa's Agenda for Children 2040: Fostering an Africa Fit for Children had been taken into consideration in local development plans. An initiative by the First Ladies of the Member States of the Economic Community of West African States would employ a strategic framework to reinforce national systems for protection of children in several key areas. Such initiatives had been integrated in community programming and annual investment plans, and their implementation was in line with the National Economic and Social Development Plan 2016–2020.

109. With regard to judicial reform, the Government had amended laws concerning children so as to clarify texts protecting human rights and reduce the ambiguities that often led to discrimination against or negligence of children. The Government also intended to introduce certification of judges for family affairs in order to

better protect children who were in conflict or who had come into contact with the law. Partnerships with UNICEF and the United Nations Development Programme had enabled the deployment of 120 social assistants to help with children orphaned by Ebola, migrant children, cases of extreme violence or rape, and girls subjected to child marriage.

110. The President and the National Assembly had also organized or engaged in awareness-raising campaigns to advocate for the rights of the child, and the Government had recently signed a memorandum with UNICEF and the International Organization for Migration with a focus on the management of return of migrants and the social dimensions of such action.

111. **Ms. Al Abri** (Oman) said that her country placed great importance on children, as it believed that children were a vital component of society. Its special interest in children was reflected in the enactment in Oman of the Children's Law in 2014, which guaranteed children the right to life and development and freedom from discrimination on the basis of colour, gender, ethnicity, language, religion or social status. It also granted them freedom of expression.

112. The Government worked to provide all the elements of a decent life for children, including free, high-quality preventive and therapeutic health care, including free vaccines. The Government also guaranteed the right to free education with a view to developing children's skills and their intellectual and physical capabilities, so that they could grow into responsible adults capable of contributing to their societies. The Government had paid special attention to children with disabilities, striving to provide them with all means of a normal life without setting them apart from other children and encouraging self-reliance in their day-to-day activities. To that end, Oman had adopted a law on the care and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities and had established several educational and training institutes for persons with disabilities.

113. **Ms. Mehdiyeva** (Azerbaijan) said that in order to bring national legislation into line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Government had introduced a series of new bills or amendments concerning preschool education, children deprived of parental care, allowances for women with more than five children, maternal and child health and inclusive education for persons with disabilities. In Azerbaijan, children with special needs, refugees, and internally displaced persons were entitled to free education at any State school or university as well as free medical care. The State provided much support to rehabilitate and reintegrate children leaving State-run institutions who had no place of residence, including housing and social allowances, and their situations were regularly monitored by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population had been facilitating the rehabilitation of children with disabilities over the previous five years, and it was clear that accurate and up-to-date data was a prerequisite to the success of monitoring and the implementation of provisions to guarantee respect for the rights of children.

114. The State Statistical Committee annually published a bulletin on the children of the country, while the State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Affairs, in cooperation with UNICEF, had established an online database containing children's educational and health information as well as reports on any child abuse. Such data was used by other State agencies. Azerbaijan was fully committed to promoting the rights of children and making sure that no child was left behind.

115. **Mr. Aldahhak** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his delegation felt it must reply to the statements made by the delegations of Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the United States of America regarding support provided to Syrian refugee children. Such assistance, if it existed at all, did not erase the fact that the Governments of those three countries were directly responsible for the suffering of Syrian children as well as for their lack of security and stability and the loss of their loved ones. Those Governments had fuelled the crisis in Syria, worked to prolong it and had hindered efforts to arrive at a political solution. They had supported terrorism, had sent terrorist fighters to the country, and had attacked Syria directly. The illegitimate international coalition and their client militias had committed crimes against innocent civilians, including women and children. Were it not for the destruction wrought by those Governments, there would not be such suffering among Syrians, there would be no need for the above-mentioned support and such interventions would not be heard at United Nations forums.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.